



Conseil
supérieur
de l'éducation

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MINISTERIAL
PROPOSALS AND OTHER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Advice to the Minister of Education
March 1983



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INTRODUCTION

A Dream Ripe with Promise

The vocational training of young people has been a very controversial subject since the time in which the trade schools were incorporated into the polyvalent high schools and the classical colleges and technical institutes were integrated as general and vocational colleges. The Parent Report had made of vocational training one of the pillars of the school reforms of the sixties by proposing that it be a fundamental part of overall personal development and an important element in a plan for the transformation of Québec society as a whole. The commissioners has expressed the hope of seeing a significant proportion of our young people being directed towards a more prestigious vocational sector, better adapted to the diverse needs of an expanding society.

The accidents of Growth

Despite the fact that the reforms contributed to a considerable improvement in the quality of the vocational training dispensed in Québec schools, enthusiasm has given way to not a little pessimism as a result of the impact of a number of setbacks. Throughout the school system vocational training often seems to play the role of a poor relation. The short vocational program has attracted numerous criticisms, including that of being a dumping place for students demoralised by earlier failure and of attracting only those pupils having little aptitude for abstract intellectual pursuits. Since a large number of young people, particularly those emerging from the secondary schools, experience great difficulty in finding work, the vocational training offered in the schools is blamed for failing

to realize the aims of the Parent Report, i.e. that young people find satisfying employment as a result of the polyvalence of their training. There is no way in which the schools can suffer from the ills of which their severest critics accuse them; they are not alone responsible for all the problems faced by young people. For some years important events have permitted the secondary schools to examine seriously their activities and the responsibilities arising from them, thus indicating for vocational training paths to reform and renewal.

*The Desire for
Change and
Renewal*

In 1979, the Gouvernement du Québec took the initiative in inviting its partners in education to take stock of the state of vocational training. In the Schools of Québec, it announced its intention to lay down a policy on vocational training «which will have as its objective the revitalization of this sector, which is essential to the future development of Québec¹». The following year saw the appearance of a preliminary working document intended for discussion at an important conference of all the interested parties. It never took place; the conference was cancelled and the working document entitled The Vocational Training of Young People in Québec was withdrawn from circulation.

The recent appearance of a new ministerial project on vocational training has renewed the discussion on a different basis; here major problems, such as work and unemployment among young people are taken up, as well

1. Ministère de l'Éducation, The Schools of Québec, Policy Statement and Plan of Action, Québec, 1979, p. 144.

as the new requirements of industry, the social and economic needs of young Quebecers who have begun their «working lives», the difficulties encountered by educators working in institutions dispensing vocational education. This document is at the moment the subject of widespread consultation.

*A Step Forming
Part of a
Collective Effort*

The Conseil sees the present opinion as part of the work it has already carried out concerning the vocational training of young people. It wishes, among other things, to participate actively in the general discussion stimulated by the proposals for revitalization and renewal contained in the ministerial document. To this end, its members have participated in the regional conferences organized by the Ministère; they have examined some of the memoirs submitted to the Ministère by organizations and groups; they have carried on their own consultations² with educators, administrators and representatives of the world of business and industry. One major preoccupation guided their efforts: to enrich the government's analysis and proposals to the benefit of young people and the schools. The Conseil has chosen to propose certain complementary perspectives which mitigate or strengthen the guidelines and the means suggested in the ministerial document; it elaborates a certain number of hypotheses for the improvement of the quality of the vocational training of the young people of Québec. While the ministerial document examines, in one way or another, every level of education, this

2. See Appendix I

analysis pays particular attention «to secondary school, where are decided social and cultural categorizations which will influence the future³». The Conseil feels that it is at this level that the problems of guidance, training and preparation for active life are posed for an important part of the population. Since the Conseil des collèges has already indicated its intention⁴ of transmitting an opinion to the Ministre concerning vocational training, the following pages will not deal at any great length with the government's proposals concerning that sector of the educational system.

CHAPTER I

Analysis and Criticism of the Ministerial Proposals

The government's proposals for «beginning again and renewal» of the vocational training of young people has many good qualities and attractions, according to the consensus evident during conferences and public hearings. On the other hand, the document has brought forth a certain number of comments indicating disquiet concerning, in particular, the ways in which these same proposals may be applied. The Conseil will next examine the main principles underlying the analysis and the changes proposed in the ministerial document, in order to bring out its strengths and its weaknesses.

3. Ministère de l'Éducation, La formation professionnelle des jeunes. Propositions de relance et de renouveau, Québec, 1982, 87 pages, p. 30. (English version: Technical and Vocational Education for Young People, 1982, 86 pages, p. 29).

4. Megnews, No 71, November 1981, p. 18.

The basis of the ministerial analysis

A broad and coherent educational perspective

*An attempt at
coherence and
synthesis*

The writers of the ministerial document have chosen to situate their analysis of vocational training in a broadened perspective of the Québec school system. While the earlier document on the same subject⁵ placed the accent on school organization and on the schools' responsibility to prepare young people to take their places in the labour market, the present study places it on the cultural influences amid which this training occurs and on the social context of which it is a part. Willingness to consider the subject in such a broad perspective goes hand in hand with an attempt at coherence and synthesis. This perspective makes it possible to examine points of interest which are essentially pedagogic, such as the obligation to provide all young people with a rich and solid basic education and the need to give to technical education enhanced status in the curriculum for elementary and secondary schools. The document squarely faces the problem of young people's experiencing the effects of academic failure by reminding the reader of the urgent need to find solutions to learning problems, by giving them special attention, by using techniques which permit of the identification of their causes, by diagnosing and correcting difficulties. The text continues by calling for the development of a pedagogy which renews itself and is adaptable to the needs and

5. Ministère de l'Éducation, La formation professionnelle des jeunes au Québec, 1980, 78 pages.

expectations of the most diversified nature. The analysis reminds us of certain proposals regarding learning difficulties, education in economically disadvantaged regions, as well as the new dispositions arising from the application of The Schools of Québec; thus an attempt is made to assure a level of coherence and of continuity with the complexity of educational, cultural and economic policies which the government has already published.

*An integrated
perspective of
education*

The document goes to the source of some educational problems and analyses some pedagogic difficulties at the school level. Thus the reader is informed that a large number of young people are parachuted, for better or for worse, into the vocational sector because they are the victims of learning problems which have been poorly identified and left uncorrected for a very long time. In order that the vocational training sector not become the dumping ground for all the poorly adapted pupils in the system, the document proposes that a number of significant steps be taken to improve its image, not only at the level of vocational training, but at the level of the general education dispensed to all secondary school pupils.

Vocational training in terms of continuity

*Continuity of
time*

To begin with, the ministerial document lays claim to continuity with the basic perspectives laid down twenty years ago in the Parent Report. It identifies certain of its most important proposals for the future of

vocational training with the objectives of the great reform; it takes into itself the choice of vocational training, «which called for the institutional integration as it is known today - of vocational training which, for the vast majority of candidates, is within the educational structures, accessible to the entire population⁶». The document is in the same trajectory as the important announcements and movements for renewal which have laid claim in recent years to the ideals of the school reforms of the sixties; it refers, among others, to The Schools of Québec, the elementary and secondary régimes pédagogiques, Children with Learning and Adaptation Problems, and the work of the Jean Commission. It draws attention, finally to its fidelity to certain major cultural, scientific, economic and social policies of recent date. The document goes beyond a simple restatement of the ideals of the past or of the spirit of recent publications. The ministerial analysis brings out some new aspects of vocational training; the same is true for such concepts as polyvalence and democratisation.

*The real meaning
of polyvalence*

A faithful illustration of the concept of polyvalence as conceived in the Parent Report is to be found in a description given some years later by the authors of L'école coopérative, polyvalence et progrès continu concerning graduated options:

6. Technical and Vocational Education, p. 9

«At a given level (for example, 10th year) and in the basic subjects, such as mathematics, the school curriculum lays down two or three courses which are different from each other, in terms of length or of content, or of both of these. These courses are said, thus, to be graduated and, because the pupils have a choice, they are referred to as graduated options⁷».

*Towards a
broadening
of the concept
of polyvalence*

This notion is to be found today in the Comprehensive High Schools of the United States, developed to dispense to pupils of the ninth to the twelfth year of studies a course with a multitude of options and freedom of choice. Here, the new régime pédagogique which is currently being applied brings us closer to the French model of the «Collège unique», and more generally to the European model of the «middle school», which dispenses the second level of compulsory education following elementary school. As opposed to the diversity of courses and options which are the rule in English secondary schools in North America, Québec now proposes a common trunk made up of literary and scientific subjects for all pupils; the régime pédagogique opens a window to technology by offering all pupils a course in Initiation to Technology in the third year of secondary studies. The specialised vocational courses are not normally taken until after the fifth year of high school. The document opts for a concept of polyvalence which aims at

7. L'école coopérative, polyvalence et progrès continu, Commentary on Regulation I of the ministère de l'Éducation, Québec, September, 1966, p. 72.

the pupils' acquiring a certain number of basic concepts which will make it possible for them to become part of the urban community easily and harmoniously, it is to this concept of education that the ministerial document on vocational education refers when it states that:

«The aims of secondary school remain essentially those of basic training, and (...) there can be no question of bartering this basic training for any hurried professional specialization dictated by the sort term fluctuation of the job market⁸.»

The document also aims at making the school more autonomous, less subject to the demands and requirements of subsequent studies:

«The school system cannot be designed solely for those who will attain higher level of education⁹.»

*The diversity
teaching approaches
rather than the
quantity of
options*

The ministerial document compensates for the cutting of the number of options with a variety of teaching approaches:

«Is it not possible, while maintaining and pursuing the common objectives, to innovate and use more diversified training methods, better related to day-today life and more suited to individuals who are less «academically» inclined^{9a}?»

8. Technical and Vocational Education, p. 46

9. Ibid, p. 27.

9a. Ibid, p. 48.

This tendency would appear to answer the need to take into consideration the diversity of needs and interests of young people, the variety of motives by which they are driven and the wealth of their experience. Since the régime pédagogique foresees the reduction in the number of courses offered at the same time as it raises the levels to be achieved, one can only hope that a variety of pedagogic approaches will be found corresponding to the many roads to learning followed by young people. This idea of polyvalence aims at equipping them for the challenges awaiting them in later life.

Democratisation

The Parent Report identified the main points of an education which would provide access to an education of quality for all young adolescents.

«The polyvalent secondary school is that institution which welcomes all pupils who have completed their elementary course and which provides them with the basic elements of a complete education¹⁰».

The conception of the democratisation of education which is apparent in the analysis of the government's proposals has its roots in a dialectic which is coloured by sociological considerations which were not current at the time of the great reform:

10. Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Québec, Québec, 1964, Part II, p. 122.

«Could it be that the system has not digested all the implications of the major educational decisions which we have made? Could it also be that, without our knowing it, the system has for economic disparity which its representatives are the first to denounce? Could it also be that, after having democratically opened its doors to everyone, the school system discreetly confines and discriminates in the name of values which will eventually serve minority groups, thus compromising the general level of development of the community as a whole¹¹?»

This perspective of the democratisation of education goes well beyond the principle of equality of access to education; it leans in the direction of quality training for all pupils, regardless of differences in social origin; it proposes a homogeneous school experience, accessible to all young people. The document forbears to «normalize» school experience for all the pupils. The reader cannot, nevertheless, fail to consider the enormous difficulties such an orientation could bring about for weaker students, whose only interest in schooling arises from their vocational training. This orientation will also upset the efforts of some schools which have set up, for pupils electing enriched and short vocational training, an interesting program of personal and social development closely linked to the learning experiences of secondary school adolescents.

11. Technical and Vocational Education, p. 28.

The analysis avoids falling into the trap of moral denunciation of any kind and of taking sides with particular interest groups; it draws the reader's attention to the following pragmatic question: where do we go from here? To this question the Conseil has some answers of its own.

The strengths and weaknesses of the ministerial proposals

The «proposals for revitalization and renewal» concerning the vocational training of young people have aroused a great deal of interest. Some of the document's orientations appear as strong points for the simple reason that they express ideas with which anyone can agree. Others, on the other hand, provoke hesitation, objections, call for revisions and further study; hence the label of «weaknesses» which we have applied to these aspects of the document. The intent of the following observations is to contribute to the enrichment of these questionable parts of the document and to make their application possible and relevant, all to the benefit of quality vocational training in the secondary schools of Québec.

The strong points

Vocational training at the service of young people

Among the strong points of the governmental analysis, attention must be drawn, first of all, to the desire to assure for young people equal opportunity for an education of quality. This notion is expressed in terms of an access to education which tries to avoid the many prejudices and influences which normally

develop from the division of society into levels or classes. The document reminds us that the school plays a determinant role, and has a positive and specific function concerning the relevance of vocational training of young people in our society:

«These cultural, social and economic inequalities straight away place vocational training at the heart of what is at stake in economic development. Not so much as some superficial analyses would have it, because of the necessity of assuring a strict correspondence between specific jobs and the profiles of vocational training, but rather because of the necessity of increasing the level of training and competence, of increasing the number of highly qualified people, of ensuring that as many people as possible receive a basic training which allows for mobility, adaptation to changes, autonomy, the sense of initiative, as well as intelligence in carrying out tasks¹².»

This position of the ministerial document has the advantage of keeping at arm's length those schools of thought for whom the function, objectives and influence of the school are of lesser importance than certain economic imperatives, certain socio-cultural constraints, or even certain geographic and historical variables.

12. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

A renewal in terms of that which the school should best provide

The affirmation of the specific role of the school is reflected in the importance accorded the fight against academic failure, particularly early failure, and in a pedagogy which adopts the courses of studies and teaching methods to individuals and to groups which become more and more diversified as their school careers develop. In this way the analysis opens the door to a number of orientations and solutions which call for an improvement in teaching methods. Even more than having the merit of having chosen to deal with the question of vocational training in terms of the whole school system, the text attempts to go beyond the temptation of proposing only structural changes where the problems are fundamentally pedagogic:

«Owing to the task entrusted to the school system, which is to provide young people with initial vocational training programs, the revival and renewal considered here will firstly and fundamentally be of an educational and pedagogical nature and it will ensue directly from the school's cultural and educational mission¹³.»

The Weaknesses

Too indirect an approach to vocational training

The departmental document's insistence on a common basic education is generally considered as being more or less justifiable. Some of those with whom the Conseil met would have wished that the specific problems of

13. Ibid., p. 19.

vocational training and its operations had been approached as directly. Certain educators, in particular, remain ill at ease when faced with an overall analysis of the situation. They are ambivalent when presented with an argument in favour of the need to bring the school into the orbit of a new technological culture. Educators can conceive quite easily of technical ability and openness to technology having pride of place in the school's scale of values in the future; they doubt, however, whether the announced change of direction can be effected suddenly and everywhere with the same intensity and will be welcomed by all with the same degree of conviction. By placing too much emphasis on the need to change mentalities and radically transform the whole of society, the document paralyzes educators who have a much more modest conception of their work with young people.

*An abstract vision
of culture*

The government's analysis puts forward a given conception of culture and a consequent idealization of objectives which are not shared by the educators and citizens of Québec with the same degree of unanimity as the document would have us believe. For the authors of the ministerial document, social institutions such as the school are at once the reflection and the dynamo of a given hierarchy of values which they promote and upon which they confer status. The schools have for a long time, so they claim, maintained a distinction between the «noble» subjects and a back door labelled «vocational!», creating a blind alley at the expense of a large proportion of the population. The document proposes taking a new

look at society where «planetary culture has become profoundly technological in its message as well as its media¹⁴». The minimal attention paid at the moment to technology in both teaching and course content are cited as evidence of the need to establish a new social order based on a technological culture which would become «in the final analysis the dynamo of social and economic development...» and which would be expressed in the schools in terms of «a training which allows schools in terms of «a training which allows for the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the vast field of techniques and technologies. This sector is part of an essential dimension of contemporary culture¹⁵.»

*Too evident a
desire to impose
a cultural vision
of society*

For many of those to whom the Conseil has listened, the ministerial document promotes its vision of a technological culture with such insistence, that it succumbs to a biased analysis of the schools and of society; people are far from being convinced that a treatise, no matter how noble and generous it may be, concerning the relevance of a turning to technology is sufficient to establish a new system of values requiring the unanimous consent of the whole of Québec society. Others find it an oversimplification to propose that by renaming vocational training «technological training» or «technological education» (p. 51) it becomes the «royal» road (p. 50) of education, providing the same general training as Arts, Letters or Science. There is some doubt as to whether the course on Initiation to Technology is

14. Ibid., p. 25.

15. Ibid., p. 32.

adequate (assuming that all secondary pupils would have access to the laboratories, workshops and equipment) to permit all of them, not only to «wet their foot» in the shops (p. 50), but also to achieve «familiarity with and mastery of them» (p. 50). Finally attention is drawn to fact that the uncompromising attitude of the document concerning the type of culture which Québec should acquire succumbs to the same temptations regarding the schools' responsibility for the transmission of values as the same paper earlier denounced in the case of those institutions which promote «certain activities of social life and education (...) by calling them 'general knowledge', (and giving) them a certain prestige at the expense of other essential segments of the overall basic training¹⁶».

*Weaknesses of the
analysis in dealing
with problems*

The government's analysis is open to criticism when it takes up the question of the school system as such, and attempts to examine vocational training in terms of the problems to which it is subject, of the resources available to it, and of the dynamism which it must seek if it is to be improved. The main weakness identified by the Conseil is the lack of follow up and rigour involved in its description of the new situations to be created by the application of the ministerial proposals.

*Utopian
orientations*

The government's document would seem to accord very little importance to what is most likely to occur in the schools, outside of the aims and proposals which it has submitted for consultation to educators; it is

16. Ibid., p. 49.

pointless to describe the tangible results which its proposals may bring about in schools dispensing vocational training. Hence the label of «utopian» which many observers would apply to aims which appear to be out of contact with the real school situation. For example, the first part of the document states that «vocational training is not, in itself, sufficiently related to the realities of life and the work place» (p. 18). All would agree that this is a fundamental problem for which they look to the text for solutions; such hopes are dashed, since the document skims over this aspect of the question.

A vision out of touch with the schools and their real problems

When the document considers certain problems related to school operation, it seems of overlook what has been said in its opening pages regarding the specialities taught in a large number of schools and colleges, regarding vocational training teachers, and regarding on-the-job training sessions, for example. Such data are largely ignored in subsequent paragraphs. The impression is given that the analysis is being carried on at a level much higher than that of the every day realities of the schools; they operate lower down on the scale. All too little attention is paid to the obstacles encountered by educators, as well as to any description of attempts made to improve the situation.

Moving from the secondary school to college

Among the problems raised by the ministerial document, that of students completing their secondary vocational studies going on to college is an example of abstract thinking. The document approaches the problem by stating that the fact that the percentage doing so has

increased from 7% in 1975-1976 to 11% in 1979-1980 indicates «the possibility of achieving real progress¹⁷». The real basis of the problem is not a matter of accessibility, but of the actual possibility, of interest and of motivation which will lead young people to take advantage of access to college studies. Such an argument in favour of an increase in the rate of passing from secondary vocational to college studies is even more unrealistic in the light of the document's proposal that young people not receive a vocational training certificate until they have been awarded a Diploma of Secondary Studies. What on earth could possibly motivate a young person, whose secondary studies have already been lengthened by two years, to opt for the possibility of going on to college before entering the workforce?

*Addition
clarification of
important points*

The document demonstrates an evident willingness to gloss over the state of vocational training and to recognize its «right to nobility». In order to do so it lists numerous phenomena which would appear to be based upon unattackable statistics. Careful consideration of this long listing of factors held to be either successes or causes of disquiet (pp. 14-18) leads one to the conclusion that the authors have chosen to ignore analyses which merited deeper study and development.

For example, the document states that «approximattly 60% of young people leave school without

17. Ibid., p. 16.

specialized vocational training¹⁸». At first sight this would appear to be a real failure on the part of both the schools and vocational training. If one considers that at least one young person in five enrolls in secondary vocational studies, that one of every two goes on to the college level, and that 19% go on to the university, one comes to the conclusion that a large number of young people acquire «vocational» training taken in its broadest sense. That is to say, they acquire training which is adequate in terms of their participation in the workforce. The document, itself, reflects this point of view when it states that «any training that accomplishes what it sets out to do, would thus, at least in the final steps, end up being a vocational training¹⁹». There are, therefore, many more young people in possession of specialized vocational training than the document would lead one to believe.

*Young people and
unemployment*

The document is again inaccurate when dealing with the question of unemployment among young people by stating: «More than 40% of unemployed Québecers are young people between 15 and 24 years of age; most of them do not have their diplomas, nor do they have any specialized vocational training²⁰.» This affirmation does not take into account the distinction which must be made between men and women. According to the statistics

18. *Ibid.*, p. 18

19. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

provided by Relance²¹, in 1980 the proportion of unemployed women was always greater than that of men for a given level of scholarship; it reaches 48,3% for women without diplomas in the short vocational sector and drops to 33,0% for those in the same sector with diplomas. It is true, as the document states, that unemployment is higher among young people without certificates; the following table indicating the rate of unemployment at the secondary level in 1980 bears this out. However, the data show that the rates of unemployment affect young people with a diploma of secondary studies to almost the same extent as those without any certification. Finally, it will be noted that those with certificates from the long vocational sector have a lower rate of unemployment than do those from the general stream.

Rates of unemployment at the secondary level in 1980				
Sectors	Sex	General	Long Vocational	Short Vocational
Diplomas	M	19,9%	17,5%	29,6%
	F	25,3%	17,9%	33,0%
Without Diplomas	M	21,6%	25,1%	32,0%
	F	31,7%	30,2%	48,3%

21. Louise Bigras, *Relance sur l'égalité en emploi*, ministère de l'Éducation, Direction des politiques et plans, Québec 1982, p. 4. Relance is a series of research projects carried on regularly since 1976, by which may be measured, a year after completion of studies (secondary, collegial, university), conditions of employment, salary, job interest, correlation between studies and work, etc.

Two missing points It would have been very illuminating had the proposal for the revitalization and renewal of the vocational training of young people dealt with the link which exists between the school and the workplace and with the experience and expectations of youth. Concerning these two latter points the government's analysis is all but mute. The Conseil will attempt in its opinion to fill the gap concerning these questions, which would seem to be an essential part of any study intended to solve real difficulties in the real schools, for the sake of the young people whose needs and expectations must be considered.

The expectations, hopes and motivation of young people in terms of vocational training A proposed policy concerning vocational training should stay strictly within the limits of the problems and hopes of young people in the secondary schools. These latter have, on many occasions, made known their opinions concerning various aspects of their preparation for work and living; there is little evidence of their protestations in the ministerial document. The Conseil will lend an ear to the needs of young people, particularly to those who have been shortchanged by the system, when it deals with various problems and suggests particular solutions for vocational training in schools undergoing renewal.

The vocational training of young people and the workplace In order to enrich the ministerial document and to make it more relevant, the Conseil must also explore such related areas as the important question of the link between vocational training and the world of work. The schools' interest in young people, as well as their desire to provide them with a future based on

realistic forecasts, require study of such relevant topics as the examination of the needs of the workplace in terms of the schools' capacity of response, or, further, the question of the foreseeable requirements of the workplace and of the type of vocational qualifications which will be needed for expanding fields in terms of the kinds of training which the schools are equipped to provide. Such are the additional points of view to be developed in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER II

Young people confronted by training and work

Young people should occupy a prime position in any study of the schools

The ministerial document gives little space to the opinions, hopes, needs and expectations of young people confronted by their training and work; in this way it lacks that perspective which would guarantee the relevance of its analysis and conclusions. This document for consultation has not been the subject of discussion at the secondary school and college levels. It is remarkable that the organizers of regional conferences seldom, if ever, invited young people to submit their reactions or to express their point of view; one can find only a few adolescents, lost amid the adults who expressed their opinion concerning the schools of which the pupils are the main beneficiaries. The program of national hearings consists of a copious menu composed of some forty-two organizations among which there was not a single students' association, no voice to speak for the young people. The several comments which

follow are intended to fill this gap by drawing attention to the point of view of young people concerning the training they receive in school and how they see the future. The Conseil is very much aware of the mordant comment of one young person on the occasion of the International Children's Year: «Adults should listen to us, we could help them».

Young people confronted by their training

The difference between an objective to be attained and a goal to be reached must respect the diversity of individual approach

The first proposal in the document states that all young people should have access to a rich and solid basic education. This objective is justified by the principles which have until now oriented all those projects aimed at making the schools accessible to the greatest possible number and at improving the quality of education services. This generous target lays one open to the hazard of doing a disservice to an ideal, without realizing all of the anticipated benefits. The risk of excessive generalization cannot be avoided except at the price of a sound understanding of the needs and expectations of young people vis-à-vis the world of work which is the objective of many of them. The Conseil has already drawn attention to a certain number of the diverse approaches followed by young people in their school careers²²; it is enough at this point to refer to their relevance.

22. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, Life in Secondary School, A springtime of frustrations and hopes, Opinion to the April 1982.

The school careers of a large number of pupils lead to success Many young people say that they find the climate of schools educationally valuable, the courses of study satisfactory and the educational activities and human relationships worthwhile. Under such conditions they are able to explore the unknown, their motivation is stimulated, their lives are enriched and they are encouraged to face the future with confidence and to succeed. They attend school because they have realized the importance of education as a means of reaching their goals. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching and a lack of interesting activities are of little moment; they succeed. Whether they be going on to further studies or entering a trade, their motivation is such that these young people benefit from the school's aims which «are essentially to provide the complete education of individuals... including those dealing with the work force, with the carrying out of roles and functions in society, as well as active participation in the fields of labour and production²³».

Other pupils profit to a lesser extent than does the majority from their school experience. These pupils, who are not as well served by the school system, demonstrate their dissatisfaction through absenteeism and lack of motivation, they experience failure after failure and are the most prone to dropping-out. Unfortunately, the short vocational courses have been seen as a sort of panacea for this situation. The difficulties encountered by such pupils must be met with strategies which motivate

23. Technical and Vocational Education, p. 27.

them and by remedial teaching which will help them to overcome their failures. The Short Vocational Course was organized in response to the particular needs of a category of pupils who were often older than their peers, and for whom the school provided more concrete activities, more appropriate to their aspirations and to their desire to find a job as soon as possible. To use the Short Vocational Course as a sort of «dumping ground» for all those pupils having difficulties with their school careers, would be to lay it open to justifiable criticism and to betray its intent.

*Laudable efforts
to diversify
careers and to
assist pupils*

Many schools have escaped this trap; they offer courses appropriate to the short vocational stream which give the pupils a feeling of self respect and of being well prepared to undertake the jobs they have chosen and for which they are eager. The Conseil has met some of these young people whose statements lead one to believe in the relevance and value of their school experiences. At l'Ecole Saint-Jean-Baptiste (Québec) and at l'Ecole polyvalente La Magdaleine (Laprairie), boys and girls had chosen the Short Vocational Course in order to become welders, carpenters or clerks; they were proud of their choices, satisfied with their courses; they felt that they belonged to the school and faced the future with smiles. For such pupils, rich in ambition but poorly endowed «academically», the government's orientation proposing to lengthen the duration of general education would appear to deny the existence of skills other than those of a cognitive and intellectual nature; it would condemn many of these young people to failure and dropping-out.

*A worthwhile
common objective
in a variety of
learning situations*

The ministerial document states with so much insistence that the schools uniformly ensure education of quality that it becomes difficult to detect any particular concern for those young people who do not share the needs, aspirations or abilities which would permit them to pursue the same objectives as the majority with any hope of success. The document proposes certain arrangements to do away progressively with the short vocational courses. To this end, it suggests a renewal of pedagogy to reduce the number of pupils with learning problems, to eliminate the word «Vocational» which it calls «misleading», to reaffirm the schools' obligation to offer to all pupils the same educational objectives. Many of the participants at the regional meetings made known their uneasiness concerning such orientations. First of all, they indicated that the so-called short vocational course answered a need both of the young people and of society; there is considerable doubt whether the trades to which the short vocational course leads are neither «vocational» nor «noble». Even though the vision of a society resolutely open to «a planetary culture become... profoundly technological» (p. 25) be clearly accepted, the fact remains that some young people like these trades and that society still requires welders, clerks, tinsmiths, machine operators and carpenters. Some educators drew attention to the fact that in many communities the short vocational course had been the object of reforms which made it both relevant and useful. Thanks to efforts made in the guidance of pupils, of the choice of subjects which offer job possibilities, the in-service training of teachers and thanks to assistance in finding job openings, these communities possess long and short

vocational sectors which are worthwhile. The participants demonstrated a certain scepticism concerning any prolongation of their youngsters' studies, which the latter could not, nor would wish to undertake, without running the risk of failure or early dropout.

Measures which meet the real needs of young people for worthwhile training

The measures which are retained and applied to vocational training at the secondary level must avoid at all costs discouraging large numbers of young people. Rather, the efforts of the Ministère should be concentrated on the development of courses of study which correspond as much to the aptitudes and abilities of youngsters as to the openings in the job market. Would it not be dishonest to submit all young people to the same courses and methods, regardless of the jobs they may one day fill? Personalised courses should permit young people to acquire a basic education suited to their needs and could be part of a framework involving alternating periods of study and work. Finally, the quality of learning and of the educational climate should permit all those who so desire to continue their school careers in the path laid out for the majority of vocational pupils along the secondary schools.

Young people confronted by the workplace

Knowing what young people think of work

The Conseil draws attention in the next chapter of this Opinion to the importance of the vocational training offered in the schools being closely linked to the evolution of the world of work. It is useful, beforehand, to know what the young people, themselves, think of work, what they expect of it, how they prepare themselves for it.

Knowing this, the schools will be in a better position to select the teaching methods which best meet the youngsters' expectations; they would then know how to establish their priorities so as to ensure the young peoples' acquiring useful and self-fulfilling employment. The school must be able to guide young people in their choice of a career and of ways to maturity which will permit them to face the future with all the realism and enthusiasm with which the possibilities of youth endow them.

*Enemployment, an
angonising
perspective for the
future*

The labour market does not present a particularly encouraging picture for young people; there is no need to describe what anyone may see by simple observation nor to repeat the feelings of worry engendered in any young person who contemplates the future²⁴. Statistics coldly describe the situation which threatens the job opportunities of young people; the Bureau de la statistique du Québec places the rate of unemployment of people between 15 and 20 years of age at 23,1%²⁵. In the case of pupils enrolled in vocational training programs and hoping to enter the labour force in the near future in an interesting position, the prospect of unemployment, of having to accept just any job, with a less than satisfactory salary, has a definite effect on their perception of the world of work.

24. See Pierre Fortin, Le chômage élevé des jeunes: causes et remèdes, Colloque Les jeunes et le travail, Secrétariat permanent des conférences socio-économiques du Québec, 1981.

25. Revue Statistique du Québec, April 1978-March 1979, Québec, Bureau de la statistique du Québec, 1979, p. 36.

*Study and action
are required*

It is essential that the economic policies of the government include a mechanism for controlling inflation other than the increase in unemployment which so cruelly affects the young people of Québec. But it is up to society as a whole, to the economic community and the schools in particular, to take up their social and ethical responsibilities in order to enable the young to take their places as citizens and as workers in a collectivity which has some future and which permits them to hope. The Conseil is currently studying this question and will publish, thanks to the work of its Commission of Adult Education, an opinion concerning the educational needs and social integration of young adults.

*Concertation and
co-operation
between the schools
and the world of
work for the
benefit of young
people*

Real possibilities for young people to benefit from worthwhile studies and to then go on to self-fulfilling employment must be supported and stimulated by mechanisms involving liaison and co-operation between the school system and the world of work. The Conseil will suggest in the next chapter and in its recommendations means whereby such co-operation might be carried on. A dialogue must also be established between the schools and young people, else there is a risk that the gap which separates the generations and which cuts communication as it develops will become even wider.

*Young people
have their own
patterns of thought
and action*

Young people do not, necessarily, share their elders' tastes, values and ideas. Modern pluralistic society offers such a variety of choices in behaviour patterns and attitudes that the opinions and demands of youth often appear to be strange and disconcerting. Certain works shed some light on the topic; the results of

the A.S.O.P.E. inquiry showed that: «It is only a minority - 31,9% of boys, and 25,9% of girls - who see work as the main source of satisfaction in life²⁶». It is tempting to conclude that the coming generation has definitely broken with the function that their elders attributed to work if one limits oneself to certain books, such as *Allergy to Work*, or if one takes such expressions as «young people don't want to work» or such jeremiads as «young people are still wet behind the ears», seriously. Researchers have rushed to add nuances to the complexity of sometimes hurried conclusions by reminding us that «it would be premature to be too categorical concerning the relationship between youth and the traditional work ethic²⁷»; they remind us that, in the absence of any truly sophisticated scientific tools, «the clarifications provided by the studies consulted do not permit us to formulate any very firm conclusions concerning what young people expect to gain from working²⁸». The last word has not been said concerning the attitudes of youth to work, far from it. Such an affirmation pleads in favour of much more attention, of a much more serious study of a subject as complex as it is new. Any ministerial policy concerning the training of young workers in Québec cannot but stop to examine

26. Dumas, Rochais, Tremblay, *Une génération silencieusement lucide? (Vers un profil socio-culturel des jeunes de 15 à 20 ans)* ministère de l'Éducation, 1982, p. 49.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

the value placed on work in the lives of young people if its aim is to make of the schools the site of real education and the crucible in which the pupils prepare themselves to face up to life.

*Schooling
constitutes a
prime means of
preparing for the
future*

The government's proposal gives the impression that schooling is the only response to the expectations of youth vis-à-vis the future, as though the fact of having studied guaranteed to all pupils the possibility of obtaining employment:

«Indeed, as we all know, when important technological changes take place and competition in the job market is fierce, the best investment possible is a good basic education, a prerequisite for any worthwhile specialization or for positive mobility... The benefits are so great, as experience will prove, that a student who completes his secondary education even in a non-specialised school, is better prepared and has more advantages than a student who cuts short his basic education in order to take vocational training which is too restrictive and too short to be of any help in the future²⁹».

It is clear, according to studies carried out by the ministère de l'Éducation that the level of scolarity influences the probability of finding a job; in 1978,

29. Technical and Vocational Education, p. 46.

23,5% of high school graduates were unemployed, compared with 13,0% of college and 4% of university graduates. Faced with the picture of a society fearful for the future of its youth, it is comforting to think that instruction may ease the scourge of unemployment. The studies of Relance on equality of opportunity in employment - remind us that in 1980 the proportion of unemployed women was generally greater than that of men having the same levels of scolarity; among secondary school, graduates women with diplomas have a higher unemployment rate than do men without diplomas in the same sector. The principle that all pupils (meaning both boys and girls, pupils in both the general and vocational courses, of no matter what socio-economic level, both rural and urban) benefit from the same possibilities of employment because of their studies is still far from universal acceptance.

*Schooling close to
life which prepares
one for living*

The Conseil has already drawn attention³⁰ to certain factors which continue to shackle the school careers of some young people, which influence the course of their studies, which decide under what conditions they will enter the labour market. Factors related to social origin, sex, to the capacities of each individual, profoundly influence the attitudes with which young people regard their life in school and their future. This is yet another reason why we must continue to listen as young people describe their needs, and the real and sometimes painful conditions in which they live. Québec schools must provide an education

30. See Mireille Levesque, Poursuivre ou non ses études après l'école secondaire, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1982.

for life and work whose cultural, social and economic aims will nourish the flowering, the expression, the dynamism and the prosperity of our society; the schools must, also, cause young people, taken as they are to grow so that they may develop and contribute to the progress of the society to which they belong.

CHAPTER III

Vocational training for young people closely related to changes in the world of work

The schools in the dock

Many voices have been raised in criticism of the way in which the secondary schools prepare young people for the labour market. The principal complaint concerns the lack of concordance between the preparation resulting from the vocational training dispensed in the schools and the realities of the work place which lie in wait for young people in those businesses, industries or services where they manage to find employment. Those responsible for training in industry accuse the schools of an attitude of indifference as far as the changes which arrive so quickly in the workplace and which radically alter working condition are concerned; according to them, the result is incompetence on the part of young workers which the enterprise must try to overcome on its own initiative. Teachers readily accept this complaint; they lay the blame on several factors, including budgetary restrictions which limit the purchase of adequate machinery and up to date

tools, their lack of recent experience on the job, their own outdated training and deficiencies in the organization of on-the-job training for pupils. Despite all these weaknesses, the young people survive the high and low points and their school careers, hoping to find employment: «Man must work, otherwise what shall he do³¹».

Since the ministerial document on the vocational training of young people does not deal at any great length with the question of the relationship of the schools to the workplace, it would seem useful to examine some of the problems raised by this important question.

Adjustment of the vocational choices open to young people to foreseeable openings in the labour market in an effort at cooperation by all those involved

Two priorities seem to be clear on first examination. Since the very purpose of vocational education is the preparation of future citizens and workers, it is appropriate to examine first the relationship which exists between the choice of a possible career and where it may lead, that is to say what openings may be available to those newly arrived on a labour market in a state of constant effervescence. In the second place, and at the very heart of education activity, we shall attempt to examine the relevance of the vocational training courses offered to young people in terms of the changing requirements of the trades and specialized jobs to which they lead. The organic link which joins the vocational training of young people and the world

31. Ministère de l'Éducation, Les valeurs des jeunes de 16 à 20 ans.
Secteur de la planification, Québec, June 1980, p. 99.

of work cries out for an approach involving dialogue and co-operation between the schools and their social partners: in this way the conditions of both study and work would be improved for the youth of Québec.

The correlation of the vocational choices of young people with foreseeable openings in the labour market

The choice of a career must remain free and personal

It is simply not possible, outside of a purely theoretical discussion, to think that there can be any true correlation between the planning of economic priorities and the need for workers. In a free society, personal choice is paramount in deciding upon a career, even though the options available may be influenced by many factors and clear information concerning them not easy to procure. Once the principle of freedom of choice is established, the school cannot avoid the responsibility which is part of its educational mission, to guide young people during that period of growth which leads to ever expanding horizons and a satisfying work experience. The serious examination of the openings available to young people in the labour market should take many sources of information into account. Data concerning trends within the existing labour force and information concerning the rates of growth and shrinkage in various sectors of economic activity are basic to the making of an informed selection. Full information of this type should be available in order to clearly define the options open to young people in their choice of a career.

Facing the future able to interpret the present

Economists attempt to estimate labour requirements by

closely following the evolution of certain sectors of economic activity. This kind of analysis, found in the government's statement of economic policy, clarifies, in retrospect, the current situation in certain sectors:

«From 1973 to 1978, for example, for all sectors there was a net creation of 190 000 jobs, and of this number some 113 000 are to be found in «community, commercial and personal services» and 11 000 in the public service. Almost all of these new positions are the result of growth in the tertiary sector. During the same period, agriculture, for its part, increased by 2 000 jobs, whereas the manufacturing sector underwent a net decrease of 22 000 positions, due primarily to the loss of some 24 000 jobs in the traditional sectors over the last several years. On the average, net annual job creation in Québec has been of the order of some 38 000 positions over the last five years³²».

The distribution of jobs by sectors of activity is also very useful and informative. Study of the work force by fields of activity has the advantage of bringing to light short term changes in particular jobs and makes possible the prediction of future trends. Tables, such as the following, developed by C. Laflamme and N. Bengle from publications of Statistics Canada³³, give

32. Bâtir le Québec: énoncé de politique économique, Québec, Editeur officiel, 1979, p. 23.

33. Table taken from C. Laflamme and N. Bengle: Le secteur professionnel dans l'enseignement secondaire et dans la société, in Revue des sciences de l'éducation, vol. 8, no. 2 (1982), p. 282.

some idea of the changes that took place between 1979 and 1980 showing how men and women were variously affected:

EMPLOYMENT IN QUEBEC ACCORDING TO FIELD OF ACTIVITY AND SEX I					
Annual Averages 1980/Dec. 1979					
	Dominant sex	Both sexes		Men	Women
		1980	1979		
Agriculture	74% M	78 000	(68 000)	58 000	19 000
Non-agricultural	61% M	2 590 000	(2 534 000)	1 588 000	1 002 000
Other Primary Branches	96% M	49 000	(54 000)	47 000	2 000
Manufacturing Industry	72% M	614 000	(601 000)	441 000	172 000
Construction	91% M	114 000	(122 000)	104 000	10 000
Public Transport and Other Public Services	81% M	228 000	(238 000)	186 000	42 000
Commerce	61% M	448 000	(438 000)	275 000	173 000
Finance and Real Estate	57% W	149 000	(124 000)	64 000	85 000
Services	57% W	804 000	(770 000)	342 000	462 000
Public Service	70% M	185 000	(187 000)	129 000	55 000
	100%			= 61,7%	+ 38,3%
Total		2 667 000	(2 602 000)	1 646 000	1 021 000
Note - 4,7% of jobs are primary 27,3% of jobs are secondary <u>68,0%</u> of jobs are tertiary 100%					

*Knowing how to
recognize normal
openings for
employment*

Analysis of the forecasts for employment and recruitment in industry constitutes another source of information concerning possible openings in the labour market; it is matter of being aware of the forecasts of those industries which have medium term plans regarding the number of posts which will be vacated by those who leave or retire. It must be remembered that these jobs, as well as those made available in all sectors as a result of the mobility and ageing of staff, are open to young workers. In working population of almost three million³⁴ souls, an impressive number of jobs are available when one considers that the duration of the average career is thirty-five years. Statistical projection of the effects of the phenomenon of ageing reveals that some 85 000 jobs become available every year. The distribution of these is not constant; it is, to some extent, subject to the vagaries of life. Certain sectors, such as teaching, may reach a saturation point which lasts for some years, leaving few new positions for young people ready to take up the struggle. Sooner or later, job openings will occur, since the low rate of recruitment creates over the years a large pool of employees who arrive at almost the same time at the age of retirement. It sometimes appears dangerous to predict exactly the relationship which may exist between the vocational specialities for which it is the schools' mission to prepare candidates and the number of jobs which may be available: there are too

34. Bâtir le Québec estimates the active population at 2 827 000 in 1978 and considers the annual rate of increase as being 2,5%. (c.f. p. 20).

many slips' twixt the cup and the lip³⁵. Such projections have at least the advantage of giving a general estimate of requirements in a given field of employment. To the analysis of data culled from experience in the major social and economic fields must be added another dimension; the vocational guidance of young people must be such as to ensure that they look forward to what the future holds with hope and enthusiasm.

*Venturing to
predict the
future: long term
perspectives*

The initiatives for economic development undertaken or envisaged at the moment by both private enterprise and government agencies do not only condition the number of jobs to be made available; they also influence the level of vocational qualifications which will be required for the new sectors of employment they create. The fields of the future, those related to the development of energy or to electronics, for example, call for a more and more specialized technological preparation. All eyes are, therefore, on the young people to whom all doors are open, on condition that they accept the challenge to be ready and able.

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35. «Those who will fill these positions /forecast/ in 1985 will come, obviously, from many fields: some will be recent graduates, others newly-arrived immigrants, some will come from other trades and, in the case of the projections for provinces, from outside the province. It is easy to see that manpower projections are not very useful for the planning of teaching programs or courses, if one does not know how many will be coming from different sectors. However, there are no statistics regarding such movements». Du travail pour demain, Les perspectives pour les années 1980, Ottawa, House of Commons, Hansard, p. 127.

*A future within
the reach of the
ambitions and
capacities of
youth*

This notion meets with some resistance among young people, already too aware of the bitterness that may arise from having completed their schooling and not being able to find jobs. There are many fields which have so many job openings that they are considered as suffering from a shortage of labour. Close study of these areas most often reveals that they call for advanced technical training, at the college level, or more frequently, a specialized university background. It is very difficult, therefore, for young people to identify what fields will be open to them in the future within the limits of their capabilities. In order to be in a position to predict more satisfactorily the trends in the labour market, so that the schools may adjust their courses accordingly, we must identify the trends of economic activity, these must be better communicated to young people preparing for the work place, and training must be adapted to the requirements of foreseeable changes.

*Identifying
economic trends*

The studies undertaken by Relance with graduates of secondary schools, colleges and universities provide indications of changes within the labour market and of their effects on the various sectors of vocational activity. These tools are abundantly used by guidance counsellors; it would be desirable were those who draw up plans and whose mandate it is to decide whether the vocational specialities offered in the schools are to be extended or reduced, referred to these instruments with the same degree of interest. Because, in order to understand the repercussions of economic activity on

employment it is not enough to know what is happening to young people in many fields at the present time; those areas where growth suggests interesting possibilities must be identified. Educators are faced with a very embarrassing dilemma when they are called upon to counsel pupils whose tastes and aptitudes suggest to them sectors of activities where the possibilities for employment are practically non-existent. There is a risk of their becoming somewhat restrictive concerning access to these sectors of activity. Have they the right to prevent young people from choosing their own futures?

The quality of vocational information

Given, that young people realize the risk they incur in choosing a career in a domain with limited possibilities for employment, a school system based on the principle of access for all to quality education cannot restrict itself to qualifying only those young people to whom the labour market guarantees a job. Once this principle is established, educators must double their efforts better to understand the evolution of the labour market, make young people aware of the advantages of aiming for a field with open horizons, and support all the efforts made by them to persevere in an academic career which is very demanding, which encourages the development of the whole personality and which will make them capable of leading lives of fulfillment and social usefulness.

Understanding the labour market better

Among all the requirements which should be included in a Québec employment policy, an understanding of the evolution of the labour market would be of great service

to the vocational training of young people. Study of trends would permit of the planning and organizing of courses related to expanding fields. It would serve as a guide, encouraging pupils to choose areas offering possibilities of employment. Awareness of trends would enable educators to adapt the objectives of vocational and general courses to the challenges to be faced by the young people. Such a policy calls for more than mere knowledge of the offers and requests current in the labour market. However, were such information at least available to the schools, were there some progress in forecasting the needs of the labour market, were the social partners to limit themselves to working together to define certain economic priorities, one might be in a position to hope to see the dawning of greater correlation between the needs of the labour market and the vocational training provided in our schools for the youth of Québec.

*Information for
young people*

Educators have an obligation to pass on to their pupils what they may have learned concerning economic trends and the requirements of the labour market. The importance attributed to the work of guidance counsellors, to courses in choosing a career and to academic and vocational information by the document entitled *La formation professionnelle des jeunes au Québec* is the same today as it was when the document was published in 1980. The content of these various informative activities should, by its clarity and pertinence, guide young people towards sectors of activity which, in addition to meeting their aspirations, open the doors to their talents, creativity,

enthusiasm and efforts. It should be remembered that the choice of course and the level of success and satisfaction which it engenders is for the pupils yet another means of deciding whether they have made the right career choice. In this regard, an interest in science and mathematics as well as the ability to pass in demanding courses are criteria which determine which pupils will be able to further their studies, in many domains. Unfortunately, certain well established sexist or cultural stereotypes are still invoked to keep woman away, for example, from mathematics and physics, under the pretext that these subjects are a male preserve. A study of the factors which influence the decision to pursue post-secondary studies, recently published by the Conseil³⁶, sheds some very interesting light on the orientation of the female school population towards careers other than those considered traditionally feminine and towards higher levels of vocational qualification. The study leads one to believe, for example, that girls have a different perception from boys of the difficulty of further studies, they see them as being of less benefit, and finally, they lower their aspirations in the face of anticipated problems. The conclusions of such a study naturally call for resistance to sexism in career choices, not only by developing interest in non-traditional fields, but also by the changing of those attitudes and ideas which weaken the desire for a high level of vocational qualification.

36. See Mireille Levesque, Poursuivre ou non ses études après l'école secondaire, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1982, pp. 31-33.

The adjustment of the courses to practices in the labour market as part of a co-operative effort by all involved

An action which would assist the schools to fulfill their educational mission adequately

Those responsible for training in business and industry have often raised their voices, with those of their other social partners, to deplore the fact that the schools have chosen to provide youngsters with a rich and diversified basic education rather than a specialized vocational background. Without in any way sharing this point of view, the Conseil has detected in these complaints a perfectly legitimate expectation on the part of the world of work, as far as the schools are concerned: that of turning out workers with adequate vocational preparation. While conceding to the schools their primary role in the training of young people, the world of work demands that the workers of the future be in a position to accept the many challenges posed by more and more complex and diversified job descriptions. It is important that the school and the workplace get together and that the courses offered to young people be adjusted to meet the requirements of both fields of endeavour.

The schools run the risk of isolating themselves from the labour market

A very valuable tool for the revision of vocational training courses by the analysis of specialized job descriptions is available to Québec educators³⁷. It is the product of collaboration between those responsible

37. These instruments, for the development and up-dating of vocational training courses are distributed, under the general title: Répertoire de profils de formation professionnelle and Répertoire des éléments de connaissance par unités modulaires, for each of the main fields of activity by the Direction des politiques et plans of the ministère de l'Éducation.

for courses and examinations in the ministère de l'Éducation and de la Main-d'oeuvre, working in an interministerial committee. Paradoxically, these instruments find much greater use on the part of personnel officers in industry, than in course development in the school system. In the latter case, more use is made of them in adult education than in regular classes. This phenomenon reveals, perhaps, a tendency on the schools' part to ignore the facts and requirements involved in the real world of work. One result of this is that young people risk growing up in a vacuum, insulated from the constraints and requirements of the trades and jobs which will one day be theirs. An echo of this situation is to be found in the not altogether humorous comments of a Fifth Year teacher of business and secretarial courses regarding the on-the-job sessions which are offered to pupils as a complement to their theoretical studies.

«It's fortunate that the pupils' three-week on the job sessions come near the end of the year, because, to their great surprise they discover that most of what we show them in class is useless. Were this to occur in January, they wouldn't want to know a thing' for the rest of the year!»

The vocational training of young people at the secondary level is basic, a general training preparatory to a particular area, not a highly specialized training which guarantees spectacular performance from the first

day on the job! Competence comes from the complementarity of study and experience. Ideally, such vocational training should be based on alternating sessions of classroom work and on-the-job training. We shall return later to this complementarity between in-school instruction and on-the-job training. It is an important key to the quality and relevance of the training of youth.

The school and its social partners must concert their efforts to improve the quality of the training of young people

Speedy and efficient improvement in the complementarity which should characterize the relationship between theory and practice is dependent on the willingness for co-operation and dialogue of all those involved. It is urgent that a co-ordinating committee, consisting of representatives of industry, the unions, the professional associations (brotherhoods, corporations, orders) in all fields where jobs are available, and of the various ministères concerned, be constituted in order to offer a real possibility of meeting together, of suggesting hypotheses for co-operation and renewed effort, of developing a plan of action and of ensuring its being carried out.

Response to a mutual need

The ministerial document of 1980 on vocational training invited the school system's various partners in the economic field to a common effort; existing needs justify a re-issuing of the invitation. Particularly for Fifth Year pupils, the on-the-job sessions call for greater concertation between the schools and business. The adult education sector has demonstrated that it is easier to select learning objectives more closely related to concrete job requirements when close attention

*Making the
knowledge of all
available to
youth*

is paid to the evolution of the labour market. Every-
thing indicates that all concerned need to co-operate
and are ready to do so. Furthermore, it is obvious that
a manpower policy closely linked to economic development
would be of assistance to educators by enabling them
to see new and relevant developments in the workplace;
they would readily identify those things required
for the adaptation of their courses.

The ministerial policy reiterates the desire for a
dialogue between the schools and industry in order to
improve the training offered to young people:

«But school and industry should establish
closer ties (...) They must first overcome the
prejudices which they both harbour against
each other as well as the difficulties in
communication which exist between them» (p. 54).

Concerted action, no matter how dynamic, will bear
little fruit for the vocational training of young people
unless each of the parties involved is enabled to make
the greatest possible contribution. It would, thus,
be possible for business to collaborate in the revision
and development of courses in various vocational
specialities, to the extent that the committees respon-
sible for such courses make such collaboration possible.
It is reasonable to think in terms of industry's being
consulted concerning the courses it might be appropriate
to offer in a given region or on the number of places
that should be opened. Such approaches are common in
the adult education sector and have given very

satisfactory results. Another possible outcome of a dialogue between the schools and industry is co-operation in welcoming pupils who are undergoing sessions of on-the-job training.

The important role of the unions

The important role that the unions should play in the vocational training of young people is too often overlooked. These organizations have a special interest in following closely the drawing-up of criteria for training which determine access to various trades and of having a say in what should be required of young people for the acquisition of their competency cards. The vocational training of young people will never achieve the level of excellence of that offered to adults unless the unions are closely involved. On the other hand, the latter must promote the social and vocational integration of these future workers with the same zeal as they demonstrate in their defence of their present members.

An effort that can upset

If the vocational training of young people is seen in terms of a continuous process of alternating sessions in the classroom and on-the-job, then industry and the representatives of the workers must agree to put themselves out to accommodate them. This involves much more than participation in one or more sporadic consultations on what is going on in the schools. It is, above all, a question of setting up ways of carrying out vocational training that will be, at once, more consistent, more interesting and more profitable for the young people. The changes which are called for in the first of the recommendations to be formulated further on in this documents call for

this kind of collaboration among the schools, the industries and the unions. Such a coming together would augur well for the revitalization and relevance of the vocational training of young people.

CHAPTER IV

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Light on the subject

Discussion of a subject as unique and as complex as the vocational training of young people runs the risk of being sidetracked in two ways by blind spots. The first arises when attention is so intently focussed on the very subject of the analysis that sight is lost of its context, as though vocational training were an abstraction, unrelated to the educational system and the schools of which it is a part. The ministerial document falls into this trap when it recommends, for example, that the courses of study integrate and stress the value of content of a technological nature. This desire would seem to ignore the fact that this dimension is not emphasised particularly in the new courses of study which were called for in The Schools of Québec and which have barely seen the light of day. Hence the feeling of being part of a closed world, out of touch with what has been laid down in that other world which is the school, battling against the contradictions of the system.

Light on the overall picture

A second danger is that of wanting to cover the entire school system and of believing that, by solving the general problems of the secondary schools, one solves, by ricochet, the problems of vocational training. The ministerial analysis attributes such importance to the general training that all pupils must acquire in secondary school, that vocational training is to some extent sidetracked and its very serious problems notably reduced. Many have drawn attention, for example, to the way in which the document skirts around the serious problems caused in many communities by children

with problems, and those who, in large numbers, vacillate between the desire to leave school and that to remain, because of the risk of failure. In laying down the same objectives and content for all pupils, the ministerial proposals overlook the difficulties faced by an extremely fragile and vulnerable group whose attitude to studies is very ambivalent. Because of their very broad implications, these goals may very well aggravate the problems of thousands who are already having trouble with the system.

Vocational training is imbued with objectives proper to the school system

To re-establish equilibrium between these two ways of seeing vocational training is to give justice to a problem awaiting recognition and solution. Vocational training demands to be recognised as a valid educational option, on the same basis as any other existing in the public school system. It cries for recognition, while, like any other living thing, it shows evidence of problems for which solutions must be found. Vocational education is nourished by the springs which feed the schools' educational mission. In this way, the schools may facilitate access to studies of quality for the largest number of young people seeking them.

This picture does not overstate the situation, since in 1981 some 37% of young people left our secondary schools without acquiring a Certificate of Secondary Studies³⁸. In addition, vocational training, because of the very nature of its objectives and methods, aims to raise the quality of the education offered to young people. Vocational training

38. «Also, for each group of 100, having the same experience of life as the same age group in 1981, there would be 63 with regular Secondary School Diplomas... Of the same group of 100 people, 45 would be enrolled in full time regular college studies and would receive a diploma». Education in 1982-1983, Maintenir le cap, Speech delivered by Dr. Camille Laurin, 4 May, 1982.

shares the schools' responsibilities and suffers from the same problems in terms of the relevance of course content, the value of teaching experiences, the quality of teaching methods and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of young people.

When integrated within an educational project, vocational training meets with special problems and requires its own objectives

Vocational training has become part and parcel of school projects where delays are common because of the abundance of problems incurred. Because it is an organic part of the school project, careful study is required of the effects produced, not only on the system, but also on the pupils' lives and careers. It is in this perspective that the present chapter will be devoted to an examination of some special problems. The organisation of vocational training as part of the pupils' school experience, the courses of study, the granting of certificates, the time available for vocational training, the distribution of pupils and the geographic distribution of courses are all areas which merit study.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING MUST FACILITATE ACCESS TO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Accessibility to education and vocational training

The importance with which it is desirable to invest vocational training, as well as that which should be accorded its objectives, have their relevance in that principle of accessibility which is basic to Québec education. Two questions come to mind concerning the policy on vocational training. First of all, does vocational training have a place in the secondary schools, or should young people be referred to technical courses at the college level? Furthermore, if vocational training is to be retained, should it be a part of secondary education, or otherwise? When the ministerial document opts for the postponement of the

vocational training of tradesmen and skilled workers to a later time, the accessibility of education to thousands of Québec young people is brought into question. When it indicates a preference for a system which eliminates the current practice of training skilled workers in the secondary schools, consideration must be given to the effect that such a step would have on their school experience and on their right of access to an education which meets their needs and expectations. The Conseil will refer to statistics on school attendance at the post-obligatory levels to illustrate the possible effects of such a development. A more exhaustive analysis of the problem is included as an appendix³⁹. For the present discussion, the following table, demonstrates the changes which have occurred in the school attendance patterns of three groups of Québec young people who reached the age of 17 years in 1971, 1976 and 1981, respectively:

39. See Appendix II.

	Age 17 yrs. in 1971	Age 17 yrs. in 1976	Age 17 yrs. in 1981
a) enrolled in pre-university cégep courses	some 32%		
b) enrolled in cégep vocational courses			
c) receiving LV ⁴⁰ diplomas and SV certificates	some 15%?	some 16%	some 18.5%
d) those with general secondary certificates entering the labour force			
e) others from LV and SV			
f) other «drop-outs» past compulsory attendance (i.e. after their 15th birthday)	50% or more	46%	36.3%
g) those dropping out before the age of compulsory attendance			

40. LV= Long Vocational
SV= Short Vocational Courses.

*Reasons to
rejoice and to
be disturbed*

The conclusions arising from such a comparison are encouraging. It is clear that there has been progress in the provision of vocational training at the secondary level during this period and an improvement in the number obtaining Secondary School Certificates. The figures also show that there has been an increase in the number of young people having access to college level vocational training during the same period. One important shadow hangs over this table: in 1981, one young person in three still failed to acquire a Secondary School Diploma. To the extent that the schools must bring the largest possible number of young people to the completion of the courses proposed for them, and should recognise what they have learned, it is urgent that measures be taken in order to make access to studies easier for those wishing to do so to enrol in vocational studies.

*A first option:
first to provide
all with a basic
training of
quality*

What hypotheses should be used for the efficient organisation of vocational training in secondary schools, while respecting the principles which define the school's «primary task as (the provision of) all students with a basic training as complete and as sound as possible» (p. 46) and to «give every student in secondary school the possibility of acquiring a high quality... training» (p. 52), while at the same time «stepping up the pupils' perseverance and rate of success» (p. 46). The authors of the ministerial document, faithful to their option of according preference to the quality of basic training, opt for beginning vocational training, as such, after eleven years of studies, that is after Secondary V, being prepared to prolong it according to course requirements as a thirteenth year of studies, which would be regraded as being at the secondary level.

*An hypothesis
which respects
the school's
educational
mission,
focussed on
the success of
the largest
number of
pupils*

A second hypothesis is offered for discussion. It is that of situating vocational training partly in the eleventh year, with the largest part coming in the twelfth. The difference of a year by comparison with current practice arises from the requirements of the Régime Pédagogique concerning those options remaining in Secondary IV and V which take effect in the autumns of 1984 and 1985. Given the statistical trends apparent in the school careers of young people, and considering the need to provide a means whereby the greatest number may be enabled to obtain at least a Certificate of Secondary Studies, the Conseil sees more advantages than problems in placing secondary vocational training in the eleventh and twelfth years of studies. The Conseil leans in the direction of this solution which offers less risk of discouraging young people and of doing a disservice to the principle of accessibility to schooling. This option takes into account the fact that the quality of basic training is not measured only in terms of length and of course content, but is based above all on the effectiveness of teaching methods and on the dynamism inherent in pedagogic projects susceptible of appealing to the educational needs of groups and individuals. These basic requirements are respected in an organisation which would permit young people to take up their vocational training at the beginning of Secondary V.

*The advantages
of the solution
as it effects
accessibility
to education*

A raising of the general level of qualifications in the workforce is inseparable from the effects of the accessibility to young people of a given level of education and of the quality of such training. The Conseil is of the opinion that an increase in the level of qualifications will not result simply by abolishing vocational training in secondary schools and then hoping that all young people

will go on to cégep and university. If it be necessary to ensure that a greater number of young people actually go on to higher levels of training and acquire a greater degree of specialisation, surely the place to begin is with the significant 37% of our youth at the secondary level who do not obtain a certificate, most often because they have left school as a result of insurmountable failures. The Conseil is of the opinion that it is more by concentrating our efforts on the improvement of secondary school teaching, including vocational training, by reducing the number of failures, and by supporting all those efforts susceptible of providing this sector the means of accomplishing its mission, that we shall bring about a general improvement in all branches of the vocational training offered in the school system.

*Consequences
foreseeable for
vocational
training from
the secondary
school to the
university*

In the light of the trends cited above, the hypothesis selected permits one to believe that the number of young people electing training as a tradesman or skilled worker at the secondary level will remain relatively unchanged.

Improvement is to be expected in the number of young people who will succeed, leading to a decrease in the number of dropouts and unqualified workers in the system.

Following such an increase in the number of pupils with diplomas, an increase in the number of admissions to vocational training in the cégeps and of stability in those to pre-university studies is to be anticipated. Any increase in the number enrolling in university studies would then be based on the proportion of those who pass the pre-university courses in the colleges. If the number of qualified graduates is to augment it is necessary to bring about an increase in the number of technicians in the specialised vocational fields. Any increase in enrolment in such studies depends

on the progress of those who obtain their Certificate of Secondary Studies. Any maintenance of the level of enrolment in vocational training at the secondary level goes hand in hand with an increase in enrolment at other levels of vocational competence, notably in the cégeps and universities.

LIMITATIONS AFFECTING VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

*Assigning
priority to
pedagogic
problems*

The ministerial document on the vocational training of young people refers to the many laudable efforts which have been made over the years to improve the quality of the education dispensed in the public schools. More recently, their objectives have been defined in terms of the content and structure of studies, the validity of pedagogic approaches and methods and, finally, acceptance, at the level of the school, of responsibility for particular aspects of its operation. The ministerial document solemnly affirms its adherence to the principle of the pedagogic revitalisation of the school:

«... the renewal will be of a pedagogical nature otherwise there won't be any true renewal. Beyond all the institutional adjustments that one can imagine, we can see emerging the unavoidable necessity of renewing the quality and diversity of pedagogical practices which should enable more young people to benefit fully from the time spent in school⁴¹.»

41. Technical and Vocational Education, p.30.

*The courses
of studies;
the primary
targets*

This willingness to let fresh air into the realm of pedagogy, laden down by the dust of time, leads to an examination of the training courses. Many of them are subject to time limitations, their outdated content no longer relevant to the jobs for which they prepare pupils. Others are too closely concentrated on manipulative details, to the detriment of the development of skills and any understanding of the processes basic to learning. Some courses are criticised as being limited to theory alone; in such cases practical applications occur only in on-the-job sessions, which are, themselves, held to be inadequate and much too short. There is, therefore, a need to point out a number of targets at the start of any pedagogic renewal.

*The updating of
courses must take
into account the
requirements of
the labour market
and the school's
special role*

First of all, much could be gained were the courses responsive to requirements arising from developments in science and technology, such as the emergence of completely new fields of employment and the radical changes occurring in existing jobs. The analyses of job requirements recently published jointly by the Ministère de l'Éducation and de la Main-d'oeuvre could serve as a valuable source of information in this regard. In this way priority would be given those fields most subject to rapid and radical change. It must be remembered that the vocational courses offered in the secondary schools are not intended to qualify young people to assume highly specialised positions from their first day on the labour market. Secondary level courses must provide broad and non-specialised training; the opposite is undesirable, because of the school's educational mission, nor is it possible, given the constraints imposed by the age and level of maturity of the young people, and the dispositions of the Régime Pédagogique for Secondary Schools. Specialisation will come later, within the school

system for those going on to further studies, on the job for those who secure employment. Industry generally assumes the specialised training of the young people it enlists; it is generally agreed that young people should acquire a sound general background and solid basic training in their secondary school experience. Companies then assume the responsibility for introducing young people to specific job requirements, thus permitting them to develop competence in a trade or vocation on the basis of the knowledge and skills acquired at school. Thus young people who have chosen plumbing, or pipefitting at school may seek employment with a natural gas supplier, in a paper mill, a shipbuilding yard or in a chemical factory. The context of the workplace will bring about some specialisation and, at the same time, develop the skills required by the particular trade.

*Structuring
the courses
in cumulative
units*

The trends toward the structuring of courses in cumulative units, that is of establishing a hierarchy of those skills and abilities required for the gradual attainment of a satisfactory level of knowledge and performance, has become very important in recent years. The effect of the recommendations made to this end in the 1980 version of Technical and Vocational Training for Young People are evident⁴². This method of course building encourages the constant upgrading of content and makes possible, thanks to a much clearer definition of the objectives of each unit, fairer and more exact evaluation. This approach has already given excellent results in the continuing education sector; it would be profitable to identify in these courses guidelines responsive to the needs of young people.

42. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

*Separate
recognition
of secondary
and vocational
studies*

The ministerial document, faithful to the guidelines on vocational training published in 1980, maintains the principle of a recognition of secondary studies separate from that accorded vocational and technical skills. The Conseil accepts the relevance of this principle. The problem of how to recognise acquired learning then arises; that is, how to assess for certification purposes the degree of mastery of learning acquired by a pupil both within the classroom and outside. Many have been the objections to the fact that the recognition of learning is merely a mechanism which is apt to restrict the content of training to narrow fields of knowledge and to limited skills. Study of this question suggests the ignoring of a finicky accounting of credits and the abusive defence of institutional limits in order to raise the discussion to the level of an understanding of the needs of young people and of their career requirements. Certification calls for the setting up of mechanisms capable of recognising and deciding upon the relevance of what has been learned from the content of courses or from other equivalent sources. The Ministère is invited to carry on the efforts already undertaken to develop an efficient apparatus for the measurement and evaluation of learning which would permit young people to be judged in terms of what they actually know. It should be possible to find more flexible mechanisms which would permit young people who have left the school system to return with recognition of both the skills and experience they have acquired for vocational qualification.

*The time devoted
to vocational
training: possible
arrangements*

Those young people who now select the so-called «Long» Vocational Course, have the equivalent of a school year in which to acquire, in the classrooms or specialised workshops, the ideas basic to their trade. The time available is divided

between Secondary IV and V, according to that given over to optional courses. It is possible to add a sixth year, called «a supplementary year», which is completely devoted to specialised vocational training. The ministerial document interprets the effects of the Régime Pédagogique for Secondary Schools in the following way:

«Actual vocational training programs will be offered after the fifth year of secondary school and the new pedagogical system will surely establish this practice⁴³».

The document goes on to state that the objectives of some simple trades may be reached in less than twelve months; in other cases preparation for more specialised fields may require up to two years. In most cases vocational training would not begin until after completion of five years of basic studies.

For a more flexible and original interpretation of the Régime Pédagogique

The new Régime Pédagogique opens the way to other arrangements. It makes it possible to devote the twelve optional units of Secondary V to vocational subjects presently offered in Secondary IV and to limit Secondary VI to vocational specialisation. In this case, the addition of a year to the total length of the secondary course gives basic training additional time equivalent to 2/3 of a year, whereas vocational training in turn is augmented by the equivalent of four months. This allocation of time to optional subjects in fourth and fifth years, before and after the application of the new Régime Pédagogique, may be represented as follows:

43. Ibid., p. 52.

Legend: solid line for compulsory courses
dotted line for optional courses

44

Situation before the application of the new Régime Pédagogique

Situation after the application of the new Régime Pédagogique

Sec 4 L.V. 24 cr. 12 cr.

Sec 4 28 units 8 u. 2 optional courses

Sec 5 12 cr. 24 cr.

Sec 5 24 units 12 u. 3 optional courses

Sec 6 36 units (Voc.)

Total: General training 36 credits
Vocational " 36 credits

General training 60 units
(+24= 2/3 year)
Vocational " 48 units
(+12= 1/3 year)

Making vocational training accessible earlier

Article 38 of the Régime Pédagogique makes it possible, under exceptional circumstances, however, to provide vocational training at an earlier stage, at the discretion of each school community. Thus, some young people might elect, in Secondary IV and V, for example, the five optional courses prescribed by the Régime Pédagogique and devote them, along with all those of Secondary VI to courses related to a given

44. Regulation concerning the Secondary Régime Pédagogique, Instruction of 4 December, 1981 (AE-10-82-01) Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1981.

field leading to qualification in their chosen trade. 'This time allocation to vocational training, while greater than that presently available, would respect both the dispositions of the Régime Pédagogique and the objectives of general education which should not be affected by such an arrangement. The ministerial document recognises this possibility, but prefers to refer to these options as «technological education» and conceive of them as being a part of general training; this playing with words carries with it the risk of turning off those young people who want to begin vocational training as early as possible.

«Technologically oriented programs for secondary students will be part of the 24 optional credit courses in the third, fourth and fifth years of secondary school. Enrolling in these programs will not necessarily mean that the student is enrolled in the vocational training section».⁴⁵

While the Régime Pédagogique may make inevitable the addition of a year in order to ensure that the schools provide quality general and vocational training, it does not exclude the possibility of using the options of Secondary IV and V as the base on which to build vocational training. School communities are free to select the interpretation which they judge best to provide young people with early access to vocational training. Whether they opt for this formula, which integrates general and vocational training, or prefer, as the ministerial document suggests, to delay vocational training until the end of five years of general education,

45. Technical and Vocational Education, p. 51.

they must not in any case reduce the time devoted to vocational training. It would be well, in many fields of training, to try to increase it.

*The choice of
courses and
employment
possibilities*

Among the numerous pedagogic problems of which any school desirous of leading young people up the right path must be aware that of the relevance of its courses in terms of the limited openings in the labour market is far from the least. Many courses lead directly to fields of employment which are either saturated or phasing out. It is not easy to grasp the motives which guide the pupils in their choice; some fields have an irresistible attraction for an irrationally large number of candidates, while others, for lack of interest fall by the wayside. Thus, in 1979 and 1980, the aesthetic field (hair dressing, etc.) produced 5 456 graduates, while fishing had only eleven. The so-called «service» sectors attracted 32 248 candidates of whom 30 146, girls in the majority, opted for jobs listed in those categories offering the poorest perspective for employment⁴⁶. Steps must be taken to avoid young people's being swallowed up by this type of course. In order to do so, those courses offering the best prospects of employment must be made as attractive as possible, as much by the quality of the publicity in use as through content susceptible of stimulating enthusiasm. In this way dead ends will be avoided.

*Diversifying
the courses
offered to
young people*

Young people currently enrolled in the Short Vocational Course are easy casualties of courses with a limited future. In some schools, those wishing to avoid repeating Secondary II enroll in the Short Vocational Course and are faced with a choice between cooking and sewing. At the same time, in

46. After Paul Corbeil, Relance, Finissants du secondaire, 1976-1981. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1982, pp 203-204.

industry a course in sewing leads to one of the fields offering the poorest job opportunities. Despite this, in 1979 and 1980, 514 young women completed the course as a food or restaurant assistant, and 613 the course in textiles. There must, obviously, be a more extensive inventory of courses which lead to trades in demand, while at the same time, providing young people with a higher level of skills. In certain fields, particularly those related to industry, the length of the courses and the age and maturity of the pupils constitute factors which influence the possibilities of securing employment. The next table shows a comparison of the regular courses offered in Secondary IV and V (labelled II) with more enriched courses offered in a sixth year devoted to vocational specialisation (labelled I). It should be noted that the categories correspond to the possibilities of securing employment (1 indicating the greatest and 6 the least).⁴⁷

Courses	Graduates of the Two years '79 and '80	Category
Automobile Mechanic I	859 men	2
Automobile Mechanic II	3 613 men 20 women	3
General Machinist I	321 men 3 women	1
General Machinist II	1 192 men 4 women	2
Construction Worker I	715 men	3
Construction Worker II	1 810 men 1 woman	4
Maintenance Mechanic I	58 men	2
Maintenance Mechanic II	166 men	4

47. Ibid., pp. 203-204.

*The length of
the courses and
the age of the
pupils*

Courses requiring additional periods of vocational training during a sixth year offer young people, who have already reached their eighteenth birthday, their nineteenth if they have failed along the way, superior opportunities for securing employment. Once again, the facts plead in favour of an increase in the time devoted to vocational training. The present allocation of time to those fields calling for an advanced level of technical skill appears inadequate. The Conseil draws attention, in this regard, to the solution outlined earlier with a view to increasing the time available for vocational training without adding more than one year to the secondary course. It must not be made too long, in fact. The ministerial proposal delaying to after the fifth year the essentials of vocational training forces young people who have elected the most difficult courses to finish at the same age as that at which cégep students in the pre-university program complete a course which is held to be superior in nature. There is risk of this factor's inciting pupils to elect the shortest possible course, intending to supplement their specialisation with on-the-job training.

*The geographic
distribution of
courses: respon-
ding to needs*

Many educators have indicated their lively apprehension of any national map of vocational specialities drawn up by the Ministère de l'Éducation. They point out the danger of the urban centres', always the winners in any division of human and financial resources, gaining, once again, at the expense of the geographically isolated regions, which are low in population and economically disadvantaged. It has been claimed that in most of these regions the young people select, more or less automatically, courses that are more or less satisfying, in order not to break family, social and school ties and to seek their fortunes with

courses leading they know not where, to possible jobs, of whose very existence they are ignorant. Statistics developed by RELANCE and others from the Tableau national des programmes d'études de formation professionnelle de niveau secondaire 1982-1983, indicate that a very restricted number of courses attract a large number of candidates⁴⁸ while a large number have a very restricted distribution⁴⁹. In other words, significant human resources, teachers and pupils, are massively concentrated in the same courses, while other areas of training are effectively deprived of support. The situation, obviously, cries for change. Any fears expressed by the sceptics that a national map would prejudice the equitable distribution of resources is both an invitation to prudence and a call for action.

An equitable and rational distribution of human resources

The objective of a general distribution of courses and, consequently, of the required resources, makes perfect sense in a context of providing young people with greater accessibility to a satisfactory school experience and of preparing a qualified labour force. The scattering of human resources undermines the potential of some courses, producing results that are at once inadequate and quite deceiving. What can be said of a course offered at eleven places in Québec which, in two years, produced only twelve graduates? The statistics in Relance for 1979-1980 abound with examples of courses where the number of graduates does not in any way justify the number of centres where they are offered. Consider, for example, the course for farm workers (111-400) offered in three schools, which produced one graduate; the

48. The 11 most popular courses are offered in 45 school boards or more.

49. Some 58 Vocational courses are available in 5 school boards or fewer.

course in horticulture (112-500) had twelve graduates from five schools; maintenance electrician in industry (236-400) saw 48 graduate from 19 schools; metal construction mechanic (266-600) had 26 from 3 schools. According to the same figures in Relance, a large number of courses produced fewer than five graduates per school. Given the hypothesis that all the courses offered in the schools function at their optimal capacity, vocational training programs could enrol almost a third more pupils than they do at present. There are, therefore both teachers and pupils who are deprived of adequate conditions for working and learning. Since demographic studies do not permit us to foresee any increase in the student population, it would seem desirable to proceed with a rationalisation of possible enrolment and to devote any resources gained thereby to increasing the time allocated to vocational training. Any decision leading to the maintenance, cancellation or setting-up of courses should be taken in the light of those principles which respect the school's educational mission. The quality of the training, the relevance of the courses to openings in the local, regional and national labour markets, the desire to counteract discrimination and other alienating trends insidiously affecting some categories of people in a society with heterogeneous values, are among the factors which will make for the surest choice.

*Conditions
relating
to the creation
of a national
map*

A national map of course offerings would appear to be a useful instrument for encouraging a judicious and equitable distribution of the resources available to a community, for assuring to young people everywhere, by virtue of their rights and needs, the quality of the training which the schools of Québec dispense. Certain precautions are in order, because of the very understandable fears and apprehensions expressed by many educators. These apprehensions

will be assuaged to the extent that those responsible for the project are in a position, thanks to efficient methods of consultation and concertation, to identify in each community both the positive aspects of the vocational training dispensed, as well as the problems. The rationalisation must not serve as a pretext for the elimination of community projects and customs. The needs and expectations of those immediately responsible for vocational training should be given the same consideration as the preoccupations of industries, of employment planners or of socio-economic élites in the development of a national plan. A manifest willingness to develop vocational training would appear to be the most efficient too for disarming the fears engendered by the idea of a national plan. Such a government project will be relevant to the extent that its conclusions and analyses are translated into clearly announced guidelines and the allocation of the resources required for their application.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis carried out in the preceding chapters has, to a large extent, focussed on the problems encountered by vocational training pupils; it was intended to bring to light the unsuspected wealth of this educational highway and to identify those signs which indicate the nature of its future. Some of the main threads lead directly to concrete propositions for the modification and revitalisation of the schools. Their only aim is to provide support for a distinct and fertile field of training in secondary schools attempting to realize their full potential.

The conclusions which the Conseil is about to elaborate differ from those of the ministerial document principally in that they draw attention to the existential context under which young people pursue their vocational training in the secondary schools. The quality of this training, the challenges implicit in the accessibility of education, the relevance of certain courses and school organisation, and the concordance which must exist between the content of courses and the evolution of economic activity and fluctuations in the labour market from the background against which all those involved in the drama of vocational training play their parts. Throughout its study, the Conseil has kept young people at centre stage, they have been the main subjects of its thoughts and preoccupations. From the logic which has controlled the unrolling of the picture and in consideration of the importance of the effects it may have on the evolution of vocational training and on the future of young people, the Conseil concludes with the following

recommendations.

*The quality of
vocational
training*

Whereas any increase in the quality of the vocational training of young people in the various trades and jobs they may choose is dependent on a close rapprochement between theory and practical experience, the Conseil recommends:

1. That all pupils who have successfully completed that period of studies devoted to vocational training in secondary school be enabled to benefit from a voluntary period of apprenticeship in the work place, for a period of from twelve to eighteen months, at the end of which they would receive recognition for the skills so acquired.

The public secondary schools provide young people with initial vocational training. At the end of their school careers young people still have a long way to go to perfect their knowledge and to acquire the skills demanded in the exercise of a specialised trade.

It is possible in the immediate future to foresee the possibility of making available to every pupil who has satisfied the requirements of secondary school vocational training such an apprenticeship experience under the guidance of highly qualified people. In many trades there already exists a framework under which apprenticeship is carried on as well as recognition of the status of apprentice conferred upon the candidate. The present recommendation reflects existing practices which could do with modification.

The practical organisation of such an apprenticeship will require the close collaboration of workers and of the organisations which represent them and defend their interests, particularly the unions already involved in training programs for workers employed by industry. Similarly, managers and directors of in service training in the same industries must be counted upon, without forgetting the indispensable support of those government agencies involved with manpower. The fact that these young apprentices are adults, workers rather than adolescents or pupils, should make it possible for the various government agencies, according to their particular fields of responsibility and jurisdictions, to agree among themselves regarding the modalities of their participation, and to modify, where necessary, their attitudes and practices as far as young people are concerned.

The organisation of the apprenticeship sessions might be entrusted to specialised vocational training centres which could be set up according to economic and industrial, rather than geographic, criteria. These centres would be responsible for the quality of the activities related to apprenticeship, for the supervision of instructors assigned to the project, for the evaluation and certification of the young workers, for planning the number of places available and for applying the conditions of admission, operation and evaluation. The organisation of such centres should, at the same time take advantage of the resources and expertise of the existing adult education centres. The apprenticeship period would permit young people to make progress in a framework of actual working conditions, under the influence of qualified workers, pastmasters in their trades. The practical experience of working, an important step leading to the acquisition of recognised vocational competence, would

establish an organic link with the initial polyvalent training received in school. This way of organising vocational training could gain by profiting from the best that adult education offers in terms of methodology, activities and in its attitude towards the vocational training of its students. There is no lack of educational resources at the disposal of secondary school pupils; they have only to be sought out. By refusing to operate as a closed shop and by not attempting to restrict vocational training of young people to the schools, at any price, the Ministère will demonstrate real openness to a host of partners who are disposed to assume their responsibilities for the training of young people. This is the key to a true policy of concertation.

The apprenticeship period should include provision for a financial allocation sufficient to assure mobility and economic self-sufficiency. These allocations could, as is the case in some European countries, be equivalent to a consistent fraction of the minimum wage.

The attraction for many young people of linking their vocational studies with a period of apprenticeship in the workplace within the framework of their secondary school experience, cannot be underestimated; the vocational sector would be flooded with recruits, as a result. It would become more stimulating, more satisfying for such pupils to carry on their studies and to reach the objectives set by the school by means of vocational studies which respond to their aspirations and needs, rather than being stifled by «academic» subjects which many among them lack the means of mastering. At the end of their course, the young people would hold a Diploma of Secondary Studies and another of Vocational Studies which would open to them the best chances

*Accessibility
to vocational
training of
quality*

of securing a specialised position. Those pupils who undertook the apprenticeship session would see their competence recognised by a special attestation. The government's project, aimed at a general upgrading of the qualifications of Québec's manpower, would fall on fertile ground.

Whereas, there are many factors affecting the organisation of secondary studies, as well as the relevance of the objectives and pedagogy of vocational training, the Conseil recommends:

2. That no effort be spared to maintain and progressively increase access to vocational training for qualified workers.

The number of young people who learn a trade as a result of sound general studies and vocational training of quality is directly proportional to the establishment of efficient and practical means for so doing. The Conseil has underlined, throughout this opinion, those conditions which appear most favourable to the acquisition of quality training: promotion of those courses most likely to be fruitful in terms of employment, research into all aspects of pedagogy, in order to make it more adequate, and the reliability of the guidance available to young people in their choice of a career.

The Ministère has made public its preference for certain options, particularly that of prolonging the period of general studies for all secondary school pupils and of delaying, in most cases, vocational training until after the completion of five years of basic education. Such an orien-

tation carries with it serious risks, which we have indicated in this opinion. It is extremely important that any modification of the structure of the secondary school program not turn away from vocational training any young person inclined to follow such a course. On the contrary, the credibility, relevance and attraction of this road to education should be such as to attract large numbers of adolescents who will find there what they require to develop their potential and to become responsible and involved citizens, as well as efficient and competent workers.

Vocational training in comparison with other secondary school careers

Whereas, there are many factors affecting the accessibility of education to a large number of pupils as well as the quality of such training, the Conseil recommends:

3. That vocational training be offered at the secondary level during the eleventh year of studies, as a normal practice, through the utilisation of the time allocated to Secondary V optional courses, in conformity with the dispositions of the Régime Pédagogique, and during a twelfth year of studies devoted solely to vocational training.

In placing vocational training, to all intents and purposes, after Secondary V, the ministerial proposals open the door to the extension of such training over a two year period, that is Secondary VI and VII. Postponing the whole vocational training course until after completion of five years of general education is irreconcilable with the concept of obtaining the V.T.D. in a single year, since this formula risks making it impossible to provide the time required by

the requirements of the courses and to reach their objectives⁵⁰. The formula which the Conseil prefers requires only one year after Secondary V; nevertheless, it would permit pupils to satisfy the requirements of their vocational training through a more flexible interpretation of certain dispositions of the Régime Pédagogique. Such an orientation is more respectful of those pupils who have, from an early date, made their choice of a career and who, for a variety of reasons, are ready and eager to embark on their vocational training. On the other hand, this formula would permit pupils who have completed Secondary V without having begun their vocational training to commence in Secondary VI.

This orientation is very similar to «Path 2» depicted in the guides distributed to participants in the regional conferences organised by the Ministère as part of its consultation on vocational training. This way of doing things would permit a pupil to undertake general and vocational training simultaneously and to receive recognition for studies completed in Secondary VI: both the V.T.D. and the S.S.D. As well, to the extent that there is a possibility of devoting the optional courses in Secondary V to vocational studies, which for all useful purposes are the equivalent of what is presently offered to pupils in the fourth year of the Long Vocational Course, some young people could obtain their S.S.D. at the end of Secondary V. These technical courses would, thus, acquire a value equivalent to that of any option recognised for the granting of an S.S.D.

50. V.T.D. - Vocational Training Diploma
S.S.D. - Secondary School Diploma

So accelerated, vocational training would then make possible the granting of the V.T.D after a year of specialisation. The inclusion of specific vocational material as an integral part of their general education, as well as the addition of a sixth year, would give pupils more time for both basic and vocational training throughout their school careers.

The prolongation of vocational training beyond its present limits involves the prospect of there being no candidates for one or two years to come. The situation is similar to that brought about by the integration of the institutes of technology with the cégeps; whereas young people had enrolled in the institutes after eleven years of studies, twelve years were required for entry into the cégeps. Such a gap cannot be avoid without bringing the whole Régime Pédagogique into question; it must not result in the teams of educators being demobilised or broken up. The resulting availability of the teachers will make possible ambitious in-service training programs for staff members in the most up to date techniques, in workshops which many of them claim to have left too long ago. Those responsible for pedagogy will, thus, have at their disposal all the time required for developing modern teaching methods, for the planning of new pedagogic approaches, for the revision of course content and for the drawing up completely new course outlines.

*Access to
vocational
training for
pupils with
learning
problems*

The ministerial document on the vocational training of young people recognises the need for special measures to meet the needs of those for whom the normal path, conceived of for the general school population, risks becoming the road to dropping out and irremediable failure. The Conseil recognises the interest which would be aroused by a program which offered pupils aged thirteen to sixteen years a basic

education of a personalised nature, followed by alternating sessions of classroom and on-the-job training for those in their sixteenth to eighteenth years. In the light of this preamble, the Conseil recommends:

4. That steps be taken to make it possible for secondary III and IV pupils to benefit in equal parts from a basic education in the principal subjects according to teaching methods adapted to their needs and motivation and of pre-vocational training, including both theory and practice, in various fields.

Such a program would lead pupils to a fifth year and also, if they so desired, to vocational training in a trade.

The present recommendation is intended to improve the lot of those young people who tumble into the Short Vocational Course after a chaotic school experience. It also meets the needs of those who are turned off by school, accustomed to failure and for whom the future is less than bright. It extends a hand to that group of young people who do not, for a multitude of reasons, succeed in their studies and receive a diploma. Besides the conviction that any improvement in the situation must be based on through reformulation of courses, changes in teaching methods, personal services, encadrement and the evaluation offered to young people by the schools, more down to earth arrangements are called for.

The hypothesis which the Conseil proposes differs from the Ministère's proposal, in that it includes the possibility of

the young people's being qualified for employment on leaving school; it would permit them to do more than simply put in time until the expiration of the period of compulsory school attendance and then to face a lifetime of unskilled labour in some community organisation, municipality, or industry.

The pedagogy of the so-called «academic» subjects calls for a radical change in methods in terms of the aptitudes and needs of children with problems. Such an objective becomes more readily attainable where competent and willing teachers take up the challenge of developing interesting educational projects and where they agree to accompany their pupils through all stages of their school careers. The teaching of the so-called vocational subjects could also gain from being made much more relevant and demanding. Many teachers of the existing Short Vocational Course improve the calibre of the courses for Secondary III and IV by borrowing ideas and content from the more specialised outlines of the Long Vocational Course intended for Secondary IV and V. This practice, far from being discouraging, stimulates motivation. The young people in Short Vocational then elect to pursue their studies, by moving, with no great difficulty, into the Long Vocational Course. The teachers claim that the care they take to respect the pupils' learning patterns, to adapt course content to their capacity for understanding and progressing is enough, in many cases, to relight the flame of motivation, to uncover unsuspected strengths in many pupils and to ensure their progress.

*Vocational
training and
the status of
women*

Sexist stereotypes play a large part in many aspects of the vocational training of women; this is particularly evident in the choice of vocational specialities made by the female population of the secondary schools. This is why

the Conseil recommends:

5. That the action of the Ministère and the schools to make the vocational guidance of pupils less sexist go farther than the hunt for stereotypes; that such action involve getting women out of the employment ghettos usually reserved for them and that steps be taken to strengthen in women the desire to seek a high level of vocational qualification, in harmony with the job openings resulting from technological change.

That, in their operation, the teaching services and all other support services in the vocational training sector, work to this end.

The school community could gain by borrowing from the experience of the awareness sessions organised by adult women in groups with a view to modifying their perception of various fields of endeavour. Many schools have already elaborated less segregationist methodologies and activities for the technological exploration which leads to the choice of a trade or career. Certain trade courses now included in the Short Vocational Course are still closed to girls. One way of remedying this situation is to invite women carrying on what has, up till now, been considered a male occupation, to talk about their work; another is to encourage both men and women teachers to work as a team in various trades.

The academic success of women, remarkable from a statistical point of view, should also serve to stimulate the

interest of girls in those vocational fields which demand a high level of expertise and scientific knowledge. Efforts must be continued to counter the effects of these cultural prejudices which undermine that confidence, to which women have every right, in their ability to manipulate tools, use mathematics or operate machines. The pupils must be made aware of the breadth of the new avenues opening up in new sectors of industry; all possible means must be used to ensure that girls embark thereon and make use of all their talents.

The choice of courses and their adaptation to the requirements of the labour market

Whereas, any improvement in vocational teaching requires that the selection of courses be closely linked to the evolution of the economy and to the development of new skills; and, whereas, certain conditions are required to ensure the relevance and quality of such courses, the Conseil recommends:

6. That the Ministère de l'Education and all those in any way responsible for the vocational training of young people be in possession of a manpower policy, or at least of some elements of such policy, in order to be in a position, within a reasonable delay, to decide upon the maintenance, the cancellation, or the development of vocational training courses; and

That all those responsible for the relevance of vocational training courses in a community give absolute priority to the up-dating of teacher training, particularly through in service sessions in industry, to the

revision of certain courses by means of close correlation with an analysis of job requirements, to co-operation with those responsible for the vocational training of adults, and to close collaboration with industrial activity in the region.

The surest means of guaranteeing the existence of that close relationship which should link studies and learning how to work remains in the hands of those responsible for vocational training in the schools. The depth of the exchanges which occur between the representatives of the schools and those of the work place, as well as the effectiveness of contacts between teachers and those who monitor the apprenticeship, during which young people gain work experience, will have a decided effect upon vocational training, guidance in terms of worthwhile job opportunities, selection of courses in terms of the capacities and ambitions of young people, adaptation of teaching and methods to actual conditions in the labour market, organisation of apprenticeship sessions, and awareness, on the part of teachers, of the conditions prevailing in the world outside the classroom.

The guidance of young people in their choice of a career and of their future remains a personal responsibility, despite the many constraints which influence them, which distort their vision or define their options. In order to be of assistance to them, to guide them through the labyrinth of choices, the Government, the Ministère de l'Education and the school community must create more explicit courses. Through a manpower policy, the Government should make it possible for young people to make choices and prepare for

the future by making them aware of trends in the world of work and by defining the level of qualification required to secure a worthwhile position. Such trends, such forecasts, would serve as basis on which the Ministère and the school community could develop vocational training courses: vocational guidance courses first of all, capable of providing young people with clear insights regarding the objectives of the school's various training options and of where they lead. Revision and development of the content of the courses themselves, in virtue of more precise objectives, adapted to the capacities and needs of youth, capable of providing them with an accepted level of skills, and, in the final analysis, of enabling them to find employment in a job market which is in the midst of radical change, must follow.

The collaboration of all those involved, as it affects the vocational training of young people

The vocational training of young people would profit greatly from the coming together of studies and apprenticeship. The most important effects of such a new relationship would be an improvement in the effectiveness of on-the-job training sessions, clarification of the decision as to which courses to offer or withdraw, and an increase in the relevance of teaching content and the quality of pedagogy. With this in mind, the Conseil recommends:

7. That permanent and efficient means of concertation be established among those responsible for education, the governmental representatives in charge of manpower, representatives of industry and spokespersons for those workers organised in unions.

That coming together of the school and the world of work, which is hailed by all as being «devoutly to be wished» for the improvement of the training of young people, has the greatest chance of seeing the light of day when concrete proposals invite those involved to work as one. The example of adult education is very clear on this subject. Those responsible for education, for different sectors of the labour market and for various levels of government share initiatives, actions and budgets in the carrying out of projects for the up-grading of skills or the creation of new areas of employment.

Acceptance of this challenge will have begun when the educational authorities become convinced that such collaboration between the schools and the workplace is not only thinkable, but indispensable. The school often has a tendency to turn a blind eye to objectives other than its own. Without, in any way, minimising its own aims, the school has everything to gain, in the interest of young people, above all, in undertaking an open dialogue with business and industry. The presence of the unions at the table with those representing education and business is also necessary, for two reasons. First, in order to improve and to ensure access to the practice of a trade for young people. Secondly, because of the extremely important role of the unions in the upgrading of the vocational skills of their members, to guarantee that young workers will enjoy the same advantages and services during and after their period of apprenticeship.

The objective most likely to encourage a rapprochement between the school and the workplace is the apprenticeship sessions, as defined by the Conseil in its first Recommendation. Some may remain sceptical to the idea of employers and business representatives acting as patrons to,

or showing any interest, whatever, in young apprentices coming, fresh minted, from the schools, while economic difficulties beset them and require them to struggle to gain their daily bread. This analysis does not propose to find solutions to the problems faced by employers, nor to respond to the needs and preoccupations of industry; its sights remain focussed on the educational relevance of the vocational training of young people within its social and economic context. It must be remembered, to their credit, that employers and industry have, on many occasions, received favourably and with some enthusiasm ministerial guidelines for the vocational training of young people; we refer to the consultations on the Green Paper in 1977 and to those of 1980 and 1982 on the vocational training of young people.

Do businesses have any interest in welcoming young learners when they are struggling, with considerable difficulty, to retain the services of their regular employees? It must be remembered that the number of young apprentices joining the labour force in this way would be minimal, in terms of the number actually employed. Further, since apprenticeship training is already carried on in a goodly number of trades, it is to the advantage of industry to welcome these young workers; thanks to what they would gain from the experience of working, they would provide continuity in industry and would represent, because of their competence, an investment in quality and prosperity. There is no question of suddenly inundating every trade with a flood of young manpower, thirsty for practical experience. Some planning is required in order to distribute the number of places among industries and to anticipate what would be required in the way of supervision, so that the needs and expectations of the young people might be satisfied.

Business and industry cannot but approve of the creation of a bank of workers, qualified and prepared to assume their places in any number of trades and specialised fields. Many industries have already established their own programs of in-service training and for the upgrading of vocational skills, on a permanent basis. Banks, mining companies, iron companies, food industries, and those involved in aeronautics and electronics, as well as many others, annually devote large sums of money to the training of their personnel. To these budgetary resources are added significant human resources, instructors, leading hands and foremen, assigned to the development of courses and to following up the progress of the workers. For industry it would be a matter of making this impressive training apparatus, from which it obtains so many benefits, available to young people; from it the apprentices would gain in competence, vocational training in quality, and industry in respect. Many western countries, whose economic development is similar to ours, successfully apply the formula of apprenticeship in the workplace as a step towards qualification in a trade. In Europe, and particularly in Austria, Germany and Sweden,⁵¹ thanks to their apprenticeship training, the risks of unemployment for young workers are lower than for members of the working population in general.

Vocational training is very costly, whether it be carried on following the period of compulsory schooling up to that of university studies, or by any other imaginable system or method. Having this fact in mind, the concertation and col-

51. See J.L. Hérault, *La formation professionnelle en Allemagne et au Danemark*, Rapport de la mission, Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1982, 79 p.

laboration of all those with an interest in the vocational training of young people a takes on particularly urgent character; each of the partners and society as a whole has much to gain from it, or to lose. If the cost of education be high but if society receive in return for its investment well-rounded citizens, and industry qualified workers, no one will quibble at the expense. Any discussion of this question must deal with the degree of moral, social, economic or political responsibility each party involved should assume in the name of the common good and its own legitimate interests. But, even greater than the costs of education, are those to be paid by future generations as a result of loss of jobs, ignorance, unemployment, aimless youth and the underutilisation of human resources. Among the initiatives that one would hope to see arising from concertation by those involved would be the channeling of the colossal sums currently swallowed up in unemployment insurance payments and welfare allocations into vocational training; such could be the result of more open discussion and more effective concertation. The vocational training of young people costs society a great deal. There could be an incalculable return on this investment in terms of an improvement in the quality of education and in the level of preparation of young people for work, and in the stabilisation of the social climate, as well as the assurance of an upturn in economic development. The game is well worth the candle.

*An active and
revitalised role
for technology
in the training
of young people*

8. The Conseil recommends that the Secondary Régime Pédagogique be modified to permit the courses in Initiation to Technology, compulsory in Secondary III, to be offered beginning in Secondary II, in those schools which so desire. The Conseil hopes that the

optional courses in technological education laid down for Secondary III, IV and V will have a tendency to awaken an interest in technology in young people, to stimulate motivation in modern techniques and to encourage them to aim for the high level of qualification required to cope with technological change.

If the optional courses in technological education were offered beginning in Secondary III, a pupil who had already made a career choice would have available options related to that vocational orientation, without being obliged to repeat the compulsory course in Initiation to Technology, already covered in Secondary II. In this way the three optional courses laid down for Secondary III and IV could be oriented in the direction of an exploration of the various fields of vocational activity.

The Conseil invites educators to make their pupils aware of the technological dimensions which underly many secondary school subjects, such as the biological sciences, physics, chemistry, logic, mathematics and many others. The removal of inter-disciplinary barriers encourages young people to achieve the objectives of their basic education, as much in their acquisition of technological background, as in the many aspects of vocational training.

The geographic distribution of vocational training courses for young people

Whereas, many factors militate in favour of an equitable distribution of training courses over all the school communities of Québec; and whereas, a national map may become an efficient means of assuring that the most

relevant courses be offered where needs are the most apparent and expectations most pressing, the Conseil hopes:

9. That those responsible for the drawing up of the national map will seek the participation of various representatives of school communities and of others involved in vocational training from all regions of Québec; and,

That the allocation of courses in each region be accompanied by the human and financial resources required to guarantee their success. That the distribution of courses not be based solely on providing young people with employment at the local level in the specialities offered, but that it be based on planning in time and space, in order to satisfy the long term needs of a growing labour market in those sectors experiencing expansion.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF SCHOOLS VISITED AND OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Schools visited

Ecole polyvalente La Magdaleine (C.S.R. Lignery) Laprairie
Ecole St-Jean-Baptiste (C.E.C.Q.) Québec, limited visit
(2 members)

Conferences and Hearings

Regional conference for the Québec Administrative Region
Conference for the Trois-Rivières Administrative Region
Conference for the Montréal Administrative Region
National hearings at the Centre Montfortain, Montréal,
28 February and 1 March, 1983.

Groups encountered

Representatives of Industry and Training Centres

Mr. René Duhamel, Directeur de formation à l'éducation des
adultes, Cégep Beauchemin, Tracy;

Mr. Marcel Colette, Directeur de la formation technique et
professionnelle, C.E.C.M.;

Mr. Léopold Turcotte, Director of Technical Training, Québec
Iron and Titanium.

Mr. Hermann Lambert, Supervisor of Technical Training, Pratt
and Whitney Aircraft of Canada;

Mr. Jean-Pierre Raymond, Directeur de la formation, Gaz
Métropolitain;

Mr. Robert J. Plamondon, Assistant Divisional Chief for
Management Training, Bell Canada.

Representatives of sectors related to the Vocational training
of young People at the C.S.R. de Tilly, Québec

Mr. Vincent Tanguay, Director of Educational Services

Mr. Marcel Mius d'Entremont, Directeur de l'enseignement
général

Ms. Lorraine Therrien, Coordonnatrice des programmes des
langues;

Mr. Jean-Noël Toulouse

Mr. André Hallé, Vice-principal, Ecole Secondaire Beaurivage

Mr. Martin Bouchard, Vice-Principal, Ecole polyvalente Les
Etchemins;

Mr. Jean Duquette, Coordonnateur de la formation profession-
nelle.

The Commission on Adult Education, Conseil supérieur de
l'éducation

Mr. Rosaire Morin, Chairperson

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lamoureux, Co-ordinator

Ms. Suzanne Fontaine, Research Assistant.

APPENDIX II

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF ACCESSIBILITY TO EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

In order to support recommendations based on such an exact assessment of the situation, it is helpful to examine recent developments in the vocational training of young people in comparison with overall school attendance. At the same time this will provide an appropriate framework for the projection of changes which are both possible and to be desired.

In the following pages, we shall, then, study the paths followed in the school system by the principal groups of young people, in terms of the various types of vocational training, and the evolution of such paths.

1. Frame of Reference

The statistical data published by the Ministère de l'Éducation makes possible study of recent years in terms of two concepts:

- the concept of the accessibility of education, clarified in part and imperfectly by data concerning school attendance and the course selected;
- the concept of vocational training in its broadest sense, including specialised skills acquired as much at the university or college as in the secondary school or specialised institutions (e.g. Agricultural Technology, School of Dramatic Art, or of Applied Art).

We shall begin this analysis by defining sub-groups in terms of various school careers. Seen from the point of view of the school system, these careers may be considered as «threads», typical pathways through the various stages of the system. The analysis of the situation which we propose in order to clarify debate on the desired future of vocational training will focus attention on the use made of these various "threads" in the educational system by young people.

The term «thread» means here a typical progression through the school system. Each thread refers to a sub-group of the school population, characterised by the length and nature of its studies, the results (diploma or not, vocational training or not) and its eventual destination (vocation, trade, unskilled labour, etc.).

TABLE I

«Threads» or Typical Careers Retained for Comparison and Analysis

COMMENTS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| a) admitted to pre-university studies at Cégep | 1. Those with vocational training at the secondary level, to some extent, are to be found in categories e) and c) for the most part, and somewhat in categories b) and a) through course changes |
| b) admitted to vocational training at Cégep | |
| c) Graduates with LV and SV diplomas* | 2. Those entering the labour market without vocational training come principally from d), f) and g), but sometimes from categories |
| d) graduates of secondary school without specialisation entering the labour | |

* These symbols in current usage refer respectively to: Long Secondary Vocational and Short Secondary Vocational courses.

market

a) and b)

- e) others leaving LV or SV
 - f) other dropouts following compulsory attendance (i.e. after their fifteenth birthday)
 - g) dropouts before completion of the period of compulsory schooling
3. For purposes of ease and clarity, the less typical careers, c) to b) or a) , for example, or of a) to b) are not examined separately, since the data available does not permit of their being followed exactly.

These categories have the advantage of helping in the identification of those who benefit from vocational training, at the secondary level, categories c) and e), at the college level, category b) or at the university level, a percentage of category a).

The categories are not completely mutually exclusive. Less common phenomena (Cégep admission without a secondary certificate, or, common without being an avalanche, admission from secondary vocational) create a situation where some may find themselves in two categories at the same time.

The nature of the "threads", while more or less obvious, is similar to, yet differs somewhat from, the official structure of the school system. It differs in this way: the threads show how individuals and groups use and live within the structures of the system. It is, without any doubt, a facet of school reality which permits of the interpretation of the interdependence that exists between the norms and regulations, which, on the one hand define that which is most lasting and coherent in the system, and the hopes, expectations and school behaviour (in its broadest sense)

of a population which is evolving in ways completely divorced from the school.

In order to make a statistical comparison, we have attempted to trace a parallel between statistics for the seventeen year old age-group for 1971, then for 1976 and finally for 1981.*

1.1 The situation in 1971

What did things look like?

The elementary school is cutting back slowly from seven to six years; of some 135 000 children aged from eleven to thirteen years, 75 000 are in seventh year, on the other hand, the elementary schools are setting up special classes for children with learning problems, socio-emotional problems, behavioural problems and various handicaps; there were, in fact, 35 286 children with «learning problems» in September, 1971.

The lowering of the age for completing the course is affected by a number of formulae for holding children back: readiness classes between kindergarten and first year and special seventh year classes for the older pupils. 14 000 sixth year pupils (of 129 000) were one year or more behind.

The secondary schools underwent a transitory period of over-population in 1971: at the same time as they received very large age-groups, they absorbed a part of the effect of the elimination of the elementary grade seven.

* Unless the contrary be indicated, the demographic data are taken from the annual statistics published by the Ministère de l'Éducation: Clientèle scolaire des organismes d'enseignement, for the relevant years.

The system of streaming of pupils (slow, regular and enriched) was still being applied without pity or second thoughts. In effect, continuous progress and adaptation to individual differences was seen, essentially, as a matter of pacing; it was carried out by setting up more or less homogeneous groups, each having its own course in the various subjects.

These «streams» are very similar to the parallel school networks of the recent past; classical and scientific course, commercial course, trade schools, schools for home economics, etc.) Thus, the secondary school, whose interdisciplinary barriers had been demolished, was structured in «streams» which for administrative reasons, affected certificates and timetables. There was even, quite frequently, a fourth stream (the «practical stream») which included those unable to cope, who arrived in the secondary school with the equivalent of third or fourth year.

The «streams» determined to some extent the pupils' orientation in terms of the inclusion or exclusion of vocational training and of its level.

Many young people left school with only a general basic education. The number of dropping out before the end of secondary school was quite large, but was not considered as very significant, by comparison with today's attitude towards the same problem. 58 673 young people received Secondary V diplomas in 1971, 56 365 in 1972.* If, for purpose of comparison, an attempt be made to distribute the seventeen year old age-grouping among the various threads for 1971, the picture which develops resembles that shown in Table II:

* See Clientèles scolaires 1971-1972, (Québec, MEQ, 1974) p. 3

TABLE II

Estimated Distribution of 17-Year Olds
among the Threads of School System for 1971

a) admitted to pre-university instruction in the Cégep	some 45 to 50%	some 32%*
b) admitted to vocational training in the Cégeps		
c) graduates with LV and SV diplomas		some 15%
d) graduates of secondary school without specialisation entering the labour market		
e) others leaving LV or SV	50% or more	
f) other dropouts following compulsory attendance (i.e. after their fifteenth birthday)		
g) dropouts before completion of the period of compulsory schooling		

We lack sufficient data to trace with certainty the paths followed by our selected group of young people across the threads of the school system in the past or on into the future. It is interesting, nevertheless, to note that, on the 30 September, 1971 a little more than half of the group were still in school (74 877 of approximately 135 000) distributed as follows: **

* Diplômés 1972, coll. Démographie scolaire, no 9-30, p. 58, Québec, MEQ, 1972

** Ibid. p. 87

Secondary I	:	320
Secondary II	:	1 023
Secondary III	:	4 436
Secondary IV	:	15 925
Secondary V	:	33 869

Children with Learning Problems (Secondary) : 1 580

Cégep I	:	14 457
Cégep II	:	3 221
Cégep III	:	56

At the same time, taking into account all those enrolled at both the secondary and college levels, 96 279 pupils were registered for vocational training, distributed as follow:*

Secondary II	:	4 748
Secondary III	:	6 135
Secondary IV	:	18 695
Secondary V	:	27 552
Cégep I	:	16 945
Cégep II	:	12 701
Cégep III	:	9 503

In what way is the situation of 1971 different from that of today?

The society of 1971 accepted that young people would require a shorter period before achieving autonomy and joining the labour market, placed less emphasis on the need for longer studies and probably asked less frequently for a school

* Ibid., pp. 8 and 11.

diploma for unskilled positions. In this context, the school system, submerged by enrolment (2 500 pupils crammed into space planned for 2 000, often with a double timetable in the same quarters) turned a blind eye to the losses caused by dropping out.

1971 is also a useful point of reference in time because of a change in attitudes concerning evaluation and failure. The principle of continuous progress and the system of subject promotion meant that, to all extents and purposes, failed courses were no longer repeated; the pupil simply transferred to a less demanding stream for the following year, for example from Secondary I General to Secondary II Slow. Continuous progress came to mean almost automatic promotion. As the failing and repeating of former years, particularly because of learning deficiencies at the beginning of secondary school, became less apparent, the process of selection for post-secondary studies changed in form and occurred somewhat later, by means of pre-requisite courses for cégep admission.

What finally happened to those young people who reached Secondary V in 1971?

The A.S.O.P.E. Inquiry provides reasonably exact answers. Alain Massot* provides the principal elements of the response to this question with the help of the two tables which follow:

* In Cheminements scolaires dans l'école québécoise après la réforme, Québec, Université Laval, 1979, pp 118 and 123 (Les cahiers de l'A.S.O.P.E., Vol 5)

TABLE 6

Evolution of Group III, T-1-T-5, 1971-75, French Sector
(Based on an enrolment of 10 000 pupils in Secondary V)

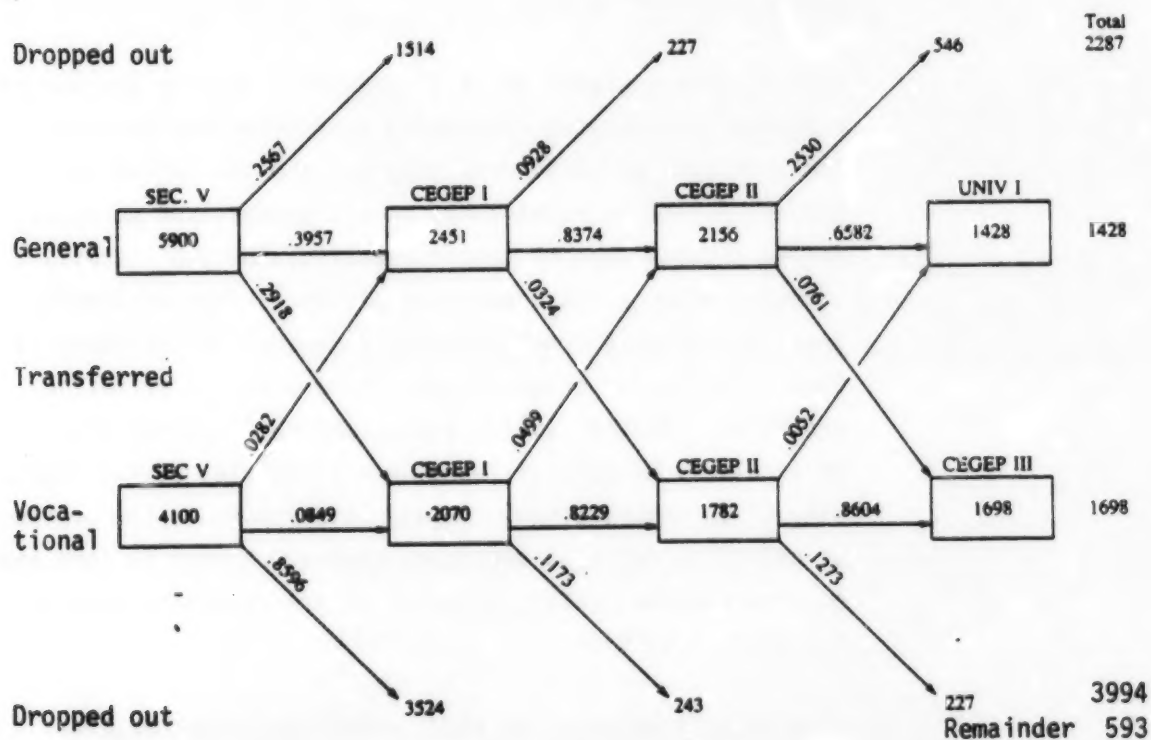
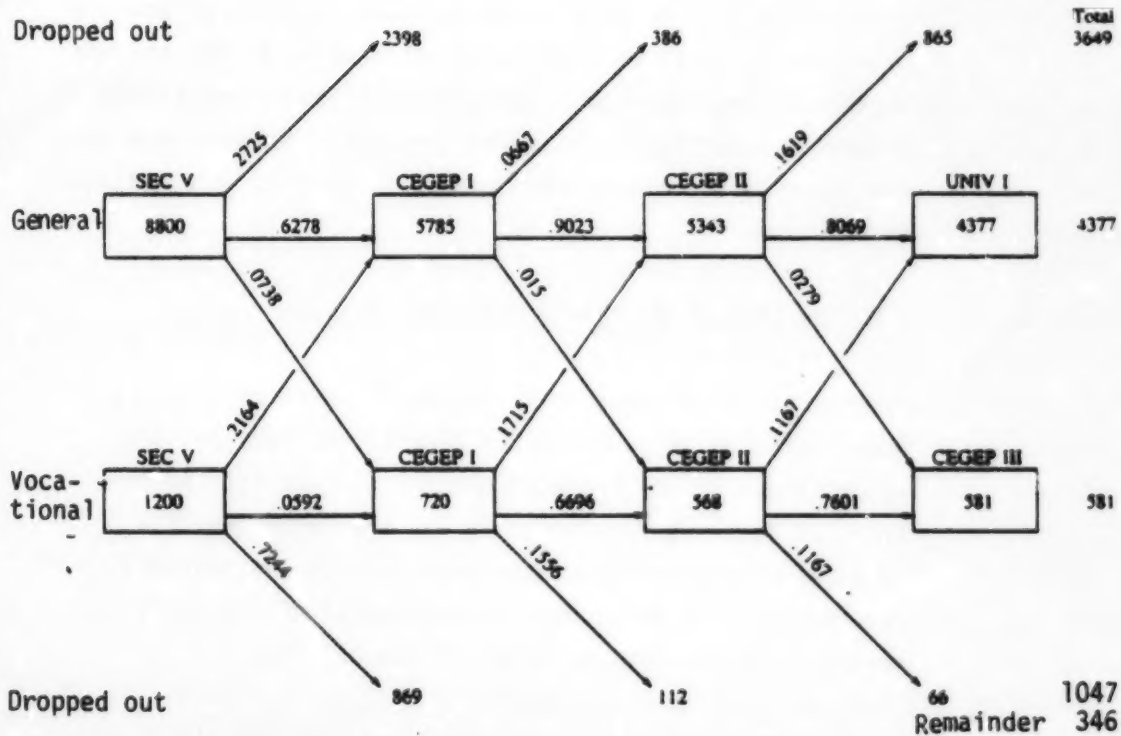


TABLE 7

Evolution of Group III, T-1-T-5, 1971-75, English Sector
(Based on an enrolment of 10 000 pupils in Secondary V)



These tables provide a clear understanding of what happened to the young people from Secondary V onwards. For the young people of 1971 the differences between the French and English sectors are very marked. In the francophone sector progress from College I Pre-University is quite limited (1428 of 2451). Transfer from secondary vocational courses to college studies or from technical studies at the college level to the university, represented by the arrows rising between the blocks, is much less frequent than movement in the opposite direction, from «general» studies to vocational courses.

1.2 The picture in 1976: principal changes

The Report of the Provincial Committee on Exceptional Children (referred to as the COPEX Report), marked, in 1976, an awareness of the abuse of special classes for too many types of learning problems. It was the beginning of a reversal of the trend, of the rejection of the segregation of children with problems. This reversal of custom has not ceased, even in 1983, to show all its effects.

For secondary education, the criticism that the short vocational course was more of a solution for the system than for the pupils was widely voiced. Its effects were felt in 1981 even with no changes having been made in the policy on vocational training. In fact, it must be remembered that the changes discussed in the Green Paper in 1977, then announced as policy in the Policy Statement and Plan of Action of 1979 and finally issued in the form of regulations in the Secondary Régime Pédagogique, will be applicable in principle in Secondary IV and V in 1985 and 1986.

Three important facts may be discerned from an overall study of school attendance figures at the secondary level:

1. At a given moment between 1971 and 1976 the proportion of young people receiving a Diploma of Secondary Studies exceeded one in two, the percentage for 1976 being 54*.
2. Dropping-out, while remaining frequent, and occurring at a very variable rate, according to areas and schools, diminished somewhat during the same period, and tended to occur more and more later in secondary schooling.
3. The great majority of young people, then, stay a little longer in school. A somewhat larger number of young people obtain their Secondary School Diplomas, after eleven, rather than twelve years of study, unlike their predecessors.

The most negative indicator remains the large difference between the number who enter cégep and those who succeed. This is not to say that there is no value to be gained from one, two, three or four semesters at college, even though no diploma be received. But the question remains crucial from the point of guidance and of the number of young people who enter upon their working lives with practically no specialised training.

How many people pass a watered down secondary program which leads to college entrance and sure failure after a brief

* R. Maheu, D. Maisonneuve: La progression des élèves au secondaire et au collégial: Iers résultats: 76-81. Québec, MEQ, 1982.

** See the statistical data and analyses of G. Boudreault: L'accessibilité en éducation: les abandons scolaires dans les écoles de commissions scolaires, 1972-1973 to 1976-1977, Québec, MEQ, 1979.

career at that level? How many college students sail quietly, or in trembling towards a diploma which almost certainly will lead to failure at the end of first year university? Statistics would indicate that the number is significant, and is not diminishing. In fact, almost one cégep student out of each group of three admitted appears to leave without a diploma.*

TABLE III

Estimated careers of the 17 year old group across the threads of the school system

a) admitted to pre-university studies at Cégep	some 40,6%	some 25,5%**
b) admitted to vocational training at Cégep		some 15,1%**
c) graduates with LV and SV diplomas	54%*	
d) graduates of secondary schools without specialisation entering the labour market	some 16%**	
e) others leaving LV or SV	46%*	* after Maheu and Maisonneuve
f) other dropouts following compulsory attendance (i.e. after their 15th birthday)		** Estimates based on Tables 4.1 (p. 86) and 8.1 (p. 160) of <u>Clientèle scolaire des organismes d'enseignement, 1976-77, Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1979.</u>
g) dropouts before completion of the period of compulsory schooling		

* Estimate based on the numbers admitted and graduating, after Maheu and Maisonneuve, op cit., pp. 7 and 14

1.3 Threads of 1981, where are the young people of 1964 and where are they going?

The typical pupil of Secondary V in 1981 began elementary school in 1970 and completed it in 1976. The first year pupil of 1979-80, who is affected throughout elementary and secondary school by the measures so effectively summarised in pages 37 to 42 and elsewhere in the document on the vocational training of young people will, perhaps, be admitted to Cégep in 1990-1991, or, perhaps, to vocational training at the secondary level.

A long view helps to restore a sense of perspective. It is easy to forget what is being done in the short term, between 1983 and 1985, for the young people in the second cycle of secondary school, made up of those who began their elementary schooling between 1971 and 1974, and not those covered by «the proposals concerning pre-school education and the elementary school». Nevertheless, it is an important matter for consideration, if one wishes to imagine what the school population will look like in 1986 .

Another defect in the sense of time sometimes affects «accepted ideas» and current stereotypes concerning a given aspect of the school system. Thus, for example, the open-line radio programs denounce in a virulent fashion the poor teaching of French in elementary school, neglect of the written for the sake of the oral, the absence of any instruction in handwriting, spelling according to sound, and the religious beliefs of university professors teaching twenty-year old students. The callers who crystallise in their words the «ideas that are in the air», the «accepted ideas», do not realise that things may have changed since

1968-70, when those young people were in elementary school. Even though everything indicates that it has greatly changed, the image we have of reality evolves very slowly. The same is true of vocational training. The picture drawn by the government's document seems often to be at midstream between ideas more related to the situation in 1976 than to that of 1981, and to the actual facts.

The secondary schools of 1981 approach a rate of two out of three in the awarding of school diplomas to young people. In fact, according to R. Maheu and D. Maisonneuve*, 63,7% received diplomas in 1981, namely 60,1% of boys and 67,6% of girls. By comparison the figures for 1976 were 53,9%, that is 48,2% of boys and 59,7% of girls.

The secondary schools of 1981 make such less use of streaming (slow, general and enriched) as far as courses are concerned as a result of the criticisms voiced in the period under discussion.

The secondary schools of 1981 led 45,9% of each age group to Cégep enrolment, by comparison with 40,6% in 1976, the proportion of boys having progressed, in the same period, from 39,2% to 41,9%, and of girls from 42% to 50,1%.

The proportion of pupils enrolled in vocational training did not drop during the same period. Promotion from the secondary vocational sector to the college level had, on the contrary, somewhat increased. A bird's eye view of the groups making up the threads of the school system shows an

* Op.cit., p. 7

improvement in the pass rate and in the «capacity for retention» of the secondary level. It is also important to note that at the same time as Cégep enrolment is increasing, the proportion of young people registering for vocational training is also on the rise.

TABLE IV

Estimated careers of the 17 year old group across the threads of the school system

a) admitted to pre-university studies at Cégep	63,7%	some 25,9%
b) admitted to vocational training at Cégep		
c) graduates with LV and SV diplomas		some 46,9%
d) graduates of secondary schools without specialisation entering the labour market		some 20%
e) others leaving LV or SV	36,3%	some 18,5%
f) other dropouts following compulsory attendance (i.e. after their 15th birthday)		
g) dropouts before completion of the period of compulsory schooling		

TABLE V
Comparative distribution for 1971, 1976, 1981.

	Ages		
	17 in 1971	17 in 1976	17 in 1981
a) admitted to pre-university studies at Cégep		25,5%	25,9%
	about 32%	40,6%	45,9%
b) admitted to vocational training at Cégep		15,1%	20%
c) graduates with LV and SV diplomas			
d) secondary school graduates without specialisation entering the labour market	about 15%?	about 16%	about 18,5%
e) others leaving SV or LV			
f) other dropouts following compulsory attendance i.e. after their 15th birthday	50+%	46%	36,3%
g) dropouts before completion of the period of compulsory attendance			

The increase in school attendance continues. As access to vocational training with a high level of specialisation, principally at the university level, increases, that to a less demanding course in the secondary schools does not decrease proportionally. It is, rather, the number of early departures which lessens considerably. There is little reason to believe that the 1981 group most like that of 1971 whose members left before receiving a diploma, is the one which will obtain a first cycle university diploma.

How young people have changed the way in which they use the threads of the school system is better described as a sliding of some of the members of each sub-group from one category to another, to staying in school a little longer, to succeeding a little more.

While more than 36% of young people remain still in the three lowest categories of the table, it is easy to see that vocational training at the secondary level still has a very crucial role to play in attaining the objective of accessibility, for many years to come.

Reservations of M. Daniel Baril regarding Recommendations 1 and 6

In order to avoid the training sessions deviating from their primary goal, which is to ensure that young people acquire competence in a specialised trade, and in order to avoid vocational training's gradually slipping under the control of industrial concerns, the mechanisms proposed in recommendations 1 and 6, that is the general systematisation of training sessions, the establishment of specialised centres for vocational training, and the setting up of methods of concertation among the parties concerned, should be part of a general policy on training sessions defining the rules within which such sessions might take place.

While providing sufficient latitude to permit of their adaptation to the needs of different working conditions, such rules should, similarly, make it possible to avoid the abuses to be foreseen in some fields of training. Such a policy is indispensable to the attainment of the objectives of the White Paper.

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